

65268

FAITH AND FREEDOM IN AMERICA.

SERMON

AT THE

CONSECRATION

OF THE

CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH,

*Park Avenue and Thirty-Fourth Street,*

APRIL 2, 1868.

By REV. SAMUEL OSGOOD, D.D., PASTOR.

WITH THE ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE,

By REV. GEORGE W. BRIGGS, D.D.

---

NEW YORK:

TROW & SMITH BOOK MANUFACTURING CO., 46, 48, 50 GREENE ST.  
1868.

SERMON

kind of things about I have written not of the kind that I  
want being and they shall be very soon and there shall be  
of it and one of the things that I shall be

What a stirring sermon that I have written  
history give to these words. Spoken by a person  
unknown among the great powers and leading men  
of the world at this day, to a little circle of dis-  
ciples in the face of a knot of scoffing Pharisees, that  
had been heard and answered by countless  
ones in all countries and ages, tongues and  
tongues. How wonderful is this great way of power  
that has come into Christ's world!

See how the nations of the earth stand  
With in the light and in the temple land!  
See the bright stars shining with glorious  
While every land its joyous strains brings

Has our country given her answer and our  
land the heard his voice and entered the  
the shepherds? America, how one of the  
of the earth is she to be also a land  
and is to our task to fight



## S E R M O N .

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.—John x. 16.

WHAT a startling commentary the simple facts of history give to these words! Spoken by a person unknown among the great powers and leading men of the world at that day, to a little circle of disciples, in the face of a knot of cavilling Pharisees, they have been heard, accepted and answered by countless numbers in all countries and ages, tongues and nations. How marvellous is that great array of powers that have come into Christ's fold!

See barbarous nations at thy gates attend,  
Walk in thy light and in thy temple bend!  
See thy bright altars thronged with prostrate kings,  
While every land its joyous tribute brings.

Has our country given her answer, and our America, has she heard his voice and entered the fold of the one shepherd? America, now one of the great nations of the earth, is she to be also a leader of Christendom? and it is our task to-night to consider the

bearing of our national passion for freedom upon our Christian faith.

Of old, Christianity made its way without worldly favor, and in the teeth of the fiercest opposition. It marched to victory upon the Roman roads that were made and trodden by legions that were bound to crush every religion whose champions would not sanction the idolatry of the Roman Pantheon; it preached the word of its New Testament in the Greek language, that was a still grander highway than the Roman roads, and used the tongue of the martyred Socrates to proclaim to the winds, that God had come to dwell with men, and that the kingdom of heaven rested upon a gospel that was to the Greeks foolishness. No bar of persecution lies before its progress here to challenge courage and stir heroism; nor does state patronage tempt servility or silence dissent. Since we have been a nation every man has been free to choose his religion, and if greatly encouraged, never compelled, to profess the Christian faith. Never in the world has there been such religious liberty as here in the nineteenth century. The Church and the State have been wholly separate, and there has moreover been such diversity of opinions among the influential classes, as to create a wholesome balance of power and to allow no one sect wholly to domineer over its neighbors, and compel conformity or invite sycophancy. We certainly have full sweep to show what we really are, what we believe or do not believe, and it is a most serious and pressing question for us to decide which way on the whole we are drifting, and whether our freedom

shows itself in free faith or in freedom from all faith. Our people, or their forefathers, came from countries where there were restraints upon liberty of opinion and worship, and brought with them generally great zeal for their own convictions and no little fire at the very thought of having them trampled upon. What is their temper when the old fire cools down, and full freedom, alike from state threats and bribes, invites tranquillity and tempts indifference, if not laxity?

I. Do we hear the VOICE that calls us to the one fold, and does our mind consent to accept the good shepherd's lead? Are we to be Christian or not?

It is clear that at the beginning of our national independence, there was among certain leaders of the movement and a considerable portion of the people great impatience of all the old faiths, and not a little of the feeling that in this new world, country and age, all things should become new, and it was a weak superstition or poor prejudice to go back to Judæa for our religion, or to Europe for our theology. The American Revolution was not merely the rise of the old Colonial manhood against British despotism, but it was part of the great movement of the human mind against the ancient rule of priestcraft and kingcraft, creeds and conventionalism, that was so characteristic of the 18th century; and here, as in Europe, there were many who had the feeling that the age of all positive institutional religion was over, and the age of reason and common sense was to do away with the old Gospel and Church, content with nature for its Bible and conscience for its guide. The great Liberals of America in 1776, were evidently more or

less disciples of the higher French Illuminism, that came to its practical head in France in 1789, and Jefferson and his associates took their direction from the philosophy of Descartes, that bade every man take his principles from his own consciousness, and break with the traditions and faiths of the past. The Virginia school of statesmen were far more sweeping in their radicalism than the statesmen of the Middle States, and New England, who took their liberty from their Bible and their free church method, and believed that freedom was inside of the Gospel and its ministry. Whilst Virginia turned theology out of its leading college, as if it were of necessity the minion of Anglican tyranny, Massachusetts, New-York and New Jersey clung to theology as the safeguard of human rights; and with them the National Independence was a continuance of the historical kingdom of God rather than a break in history and a war with the antecedents of faith and order. Now how has this difference been settled, and how far has freedom been willing to accept faith and harmonize reason and conscience with Christianity! It is precisely here that we are to make our main point clear; and I affirm without misgiving, that our America has been now for nearly a hundred years bringing the instincts of liberty into line with the sentiment of faith; and that our highest work as a people in the 19th century has been the reconstruction of religious ideas on the basis of freedom of conscience. May we not explicitly declare, that the voice within the soul has been more and more hearing the voice of our Lord, and seeking the sway of the Good Shepherd and the peace of his fold.



1. The first illustration of the alliance of freedom with faith is given by the unquestionable fact, that our American people have been constantly growing into the conviction that the Christian religion is essentially humane, and that its founder and head is perfected humanity and the historical centre of all pure and exalted human characters and virtues. His voice is more than human we believe: yet none the less human from its union with the Divine; and we are feeling perhaps as no nation ever before felt, that Jesus belongs to us all as men, that the Son of Man belongs to mankind, and no ghostly dogmas or priestly devices should be allowed to take him away from our human sympathies and affections. The time was, and some of us can remember it, when it was thought almost impious to speak of him as an example for us, and the whole stress of preaching was laid upon his miraculous nature and office. Now the most earnest preachers are willing to say, "Behold the Man," and the most rigid of educated theologians are quite sure that he is Son of Man as well as Son of God. Our conscience listens reverently to his conscience, and the voice within us is ready to hear the voice within him. Our heart beats with his heart, and our love is confirmed by the perfect love that was within him.

The growing regard for the humanity of Jesus comes from various causes; in part from dissatisfaction with the noisy, aggressive humanity of the merely theoretic or political school of reformers; in part from our sense of our own imperfection and the yearning for a perfect standard of human character;

in part from the influence of enlightened and exalted teachers, who have seen so clearly the great truth, that man as such was made for religion, that not merely his misery and sin, but his worth and welfare call him to the Gospel, and that our Lord himself is a truer example of genuine manhood than any of the scoffers who have jeered at him as an impostor, and called it manly to deny his sacred name. We are little aware how much the principle of the true dignity of human nature has had to do with the rising reconciliation of free conscience with Christian faith. The old Deists, when they scoffed at the miraculous or supernatural claims of Christianity, spoke, indeed, with frequent respect of the character and precepts of its great teacher, but the chief of them had little idea of his nearness to our humanity in his inmost faith and in his communion with God. When in the year 1795, Paine's *Age of Reason*, that strong and not atheistical, but coarse and venomous book, appeared, how many of its host of readers had any adequate sense of the true human worth of the being whose religion was thus rudely assailed? How many who liked the book had any such conviction as now prevails of the riches of our Lord's human character; and how many who hated the book saw how far the fierce Deist's argument might be turned against him, and the humanity of Jesus might be the ground of how deep and exalted a faith! What a transition from the Deistical Humanitarianism of that day to the Christian humanity of our own—from the negative Unitarianism of Thomas Jefferson to the positive Unitarianism of William Ellery Channing—from the

shocking materialism of Helvetius on Man to the earnest, tender and wise spirituality of the "Ecce Homo," that remarkable book which bigots dread and devout thinkers enjoy; the book which some small churchmen here as in England have hooted at as utterly deadly to religion, but which masters of scholarship and manhood, like Gladstone, the first layman of the Church of England, hail as a new plank in the platform of faith, a new and blessed plea for the Divinity of Christ as having its proper resting place in his pure and perfect humanity. Or, to contrast stormy agitators with each other, compare the Age of Reason with Theodore Parker's \* Discourse of Religion, defective as its theology is, and see how far humanity may rise above scoffing into faith, and how much of the divine it may find in the humanity

\* We must learn in future to distinguish between Theodore Parker as a rash assailant of historical Christianity, a sometimes doubtful scholar in the Scriptures, an extravagant theorist, a bitter partisan, and Theodore Parker as a devout and humane man, and a powerful, eloquent champion of human rights and spiritual religion. I have met nothing of late that recalls so favorably the good genius of my old fellow-student and messmate at Cambridge, as his admirable statement of the often forgotten distinction between the immanence and transcendence of God: "If God be infinite, then he must be immanent; perfectly and totally present in Nature and in Spirit. Thus there is no point in space, no atom of matter, but God is there; no point of spirit, no atom of soul, but God is there. And yet finite matter and finite spirit do not exhaust God. He transcends the world of matter and of spirit; and in virtue of that transcendence continually makes the world of matter purer and of mind wiser. So there is really a progress in the manifestation of God, not a progress in God the manifesting." Here surely is a philosophical base for a stronger Christology than Mr. Parker ever affirmed. Here is the Father over all, revealed by the Word and Spirit, if we carry out the thought into history, as the true Transcendental thinkers are now doing.



of Jesus, and yearn to declare to all who doubt God's Fatherhood and man's immortality. From these and all instances, acknowledge that the conscience of our people has been drawing nearer Christ on his human side, and claiming him as part of our human birth-right. Fair play to the human mind, we say, in the face of all attempts to trample upon reason, conscience and humanity now. Fair play to the human mind, whether in face of the slave-power that would make of man a chattel or a beast of burden, or in face of the priestcraft that would tread down his liberty of conscience. If the slave power in America quarrelled with the human mind, so much the worse for the slave power; if the Pope's Encyclical Letter quarrelled with the human mind and invokes the return of the tyranny of the old Inquisition, so much the worse for the Pope. Justice to the human mind in all ages, we are also ready to say, justice above all to him who presents the human mind in its most exalted relations, open to the breath of the Holy Spirit and in union with the mind of the Eternal God. We Americans hear thy voice, O Son of Man, and the voice within us accepts thine as the voice of true man, made in the image of God, and calling it death to live apart from God—the living God.

2. So the voice within us calls for the voice of the Son of Man, and within us and within him, it calls out too for the voice of God. We want true man, because we want the true God, without whom man is not himself, but a sad prodigal, a famishing runaway. In free conscience we hear Jesus, because God was with him, and speaks to us through him.



Fair play to the human mind to rise as well as range, to rise into communion with God, as well as range freely in the wide fields of human fellowship, culture and daring. If we are free to know man's capacity for receiving God, we are free to know God's love to be near to man, and there is no nobler freedom than that which yearns for God. The perfection of His being appears in His diffusion of His gifts, and above all in the gift of Himself. He who is good to all and whose tender mercies are over all His works does not deny our most inward and pressing need, our want of Himself. He seeks to communicate Himself to His creatures, and all earnest souls cry to Him for His Word and Spirit, as eagerly as the ravens cry for food. All races, nations and ages feel this want, and God in some way provides for it, and never leaves himself without a witness. This aspect of history, we Americans have been more and more accepting; and our danger is more from the Pantheism that confounds all mind with God, than from the Atheism that denies his being. Are we not seeing and feeling more and more the need of faith in the personal God, our Father in heaven as manifest in Jesus Christ, and witnessed by the Spirit, alike to meet the needs of our own souls, and to save us from a host of wild fancies and perilous delusions. How fearful is that ready Pantheism that makes a God of the multitude and is confounded by a Babel of tongues or a mob of impulses and opinions, and perhaps consciences, and how blessed the faith that leads the free conscience to the Eternal Word that made all things and speaks to us in Jesus Christ. His-

tory is luminous as read in that light, and man is seen to rise as God comes to him and illuminates and moves him, and gathers him to his kingdom. We are studying God's dealing with us more from his character as Father and from our need of receiving him as such, and urging more the approaches of his mercy as Father, than the visitation of his wrath as King and Judge.

So we are receiving the doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Christ as never before, and looking upon it as the regular development of the divine plan, and not merely as a startling wonder \* depending solely upon the miraculous birth of Christ. With that miracle, as in Matthew and Luke, or without

\* As to the miraculous birth of Jesus, our fathers and brethren have precisely the same liberty of opinion as other Christians, and differ about as widely. Some of them stoutly contend for the miracle, as essential to faith, others are unwilling to dogmatize about it, others emphatically deny it, while the greater number are content with maintaining that whatever view we may hold of the origin of Jesus, his Divine Sonship rests upon his partaking of the divine nature by the indwelling Word and Spirit, and not upon the specific miracle of birth. The great Bible-work of Bunsen maintains that Jesus is Son of God by being in direct and full union with God, according to the Gospel of John, and not by his having no human father. Our most severe Unitarian critic, Andrews Norton thought that Luke's account of Christ's birth presented no important difficulties, and that "in regard to the main event related, the miraculous conception of Jesus, it seems to me not difficult to discern in it purposes worthy of God. It corresponds with his office; presenting him to the mind of the believer as an individual set apart from all other men, coming into the world with the stamp of God upon him, answerably to his purpose here, which was to speak to us with authority from God." Need I say that we must distinguish between the usual belief in the miraculous conception of Jesus and the Roman dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary in the womb of her mother Anna, who is said to have conceived of a sinless child in marriage.

urging it, as in John, the Incarnation, according to the Gospel of John, is the union of the Divine Word or Eternal wisdom with mankind in the Beloved Son, and this union is represented as the completing of creation, the humanizing of God, and the divinizing of man. It gives us not only Jesus, but the Christ, and as we behold the Divine mind so abundantly imparted, we see the true Emanuel, God with us, and are ready to repeat the faith of the Church Universal: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."\*

Our America has been accepting this faith as never before, and our best minds have been showing

\* It is evident that our American thought is dealing more thoroughly with the subject of Christ's nature and distinguishing as never before between the human Jesus and the divine Christ. All writers that aim to present God as manifesting himself in creation and history by His Word and Spirit, such as Swedenborg and Schleiermacher, find a powerful and widening circle of readers, and our native Americans of theosophic gifts like Bushnell, Emerson, and Hedge, are much cherished. Our modern philosophers, too, who have tried to grapple with the unity of things and show forth the idea of the universe, are slowly winning their way to notice, and helping to shape our notions of the manifestations of God. Spinoza, Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, all are throwing light in different ways, and more or less clearness on the Christ, as the manifestation of God, by showing the manifestations of supreme law in nature and man. Even the new positivist school of Comte, and Spencer, and Mill, has its spiritual use, and will ere long tell on the higher plane of thought, as soon as spiritual phenomena are duly recognized, the facts of history and man are observed and analyzed, and it is seen that that the Eternal Word is written everywhere, and the Eternal Spirit is the chief fact of creation, and the factor of history, at once the great phenomenon of time and the great purpose of nature and life. The new freethinkers, also, without meaning it, are helping our faith, and while the brilliant Renan vindicates Jesus as an historical person, the philosophizing Strauss shows that the Christ came not of man but of God and his providence.



its bearing on the elevation of man and the glory of God, and its freedom from the tri-theistic superstition that has so often made it repulsive to thoughtful men. Our most enlightened Trinitarian preachers and writers, like Dr. Bushnell and his large school of followers, are declaring most explicitly the monotheism of the Bible, and virtually accepting the view of the Deity which Dr. Dorner, of Berlin, the leader of the higher German Evangelical theology, set forth last year, in his noble book on Protestant theology, when he wrote that "God is one absolute personality in three modes of being"—a view which Unitarians as such are not compelled to reject, and which some of them receive, although, like myself, they refuse to insist upon this definition, as essential to faith. Our own leading thinkers are taking more decided ground for the Divinity of Christ and presenting him as transcendently partaking of the Divine nature.\* Dr. F. H. Hedge, in his *Reason in Religion*, writes: "To

\* The best way of expressing our faith in Christ is to take the simple and comprehensive language of the Scriptures, especially of the Gospels, in order to declare the being and manifestation of God, and to shun narrow sectarianism and unwarrantable dogmatism. The essential fact of God in Christ saves us from Tri-theism and bald Humanitarianism. I can never hear it declared that Christ is mere man, and only the official agent of God, apart from especial union with the divine nature, without recalling the scathing sarcasm of Leibnitz in response to the Socinian dogma in the simple word: "Muhammedanismus." I love the old Gospel realism as to God over all, in history and the soul, or overruling, indwelling and animating, and never repeat or read the order of Baptism "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," without regarding the words as comprehending the marrow of sacred history, the rule of life, and the sum total of divine grace and spiritual blessedness. It is cheering to see what positive ground our own best thinkers are taking, and how they are appreciating and defending the



me it seems that the truest form of the Christian faith unites both elements, the divine and the human; and that none can know the full power of the Gospel, and experience all its height and breadth, where either is wanting. We want the divine; we want to see in Christianity the power of God and the wisdom of God made manifest for the moral welfare of man; we want to see the Spirit of God entering into human nature, to revive and redeem it. We want a teacher conscious of God's in-presence, claiming attention as a voice out of heaven. We want a doctrine which shall announce itself with divine authority; not a system of moral philosophy, but the word and kingdom of God." Another of our leading theologians, and like Dr. Hedge, a professor of our Cambridge Theological School, Dr. James F. Clarke, in his *Truth and Errors of Orthodoxy*, writes thus: "According to the New Testament, the Father would seem to be the source of all things, the Creator, the Fountain of being and of life. The Son is spoken of as the manifestation of that Being in Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost is spoken of as the spiritual influence proceeding from the Father and the Son, dwelling in the hearts of believers, as the source of their life—the idea of God seen in causation, in reason, and in conscience, as making the very life of the soul itself."

The view that I am moved to present concerning

ideas of St. John's gospel, and vindicating the real thought of Athanasius from its tri-theistic corruptions, and from the errors of the so-called Athanasian Creed. Such scholars as Hase, Meyer, and Tischendorf, abroad, and Fisher, Hedge, and Clarke at home, maintain the genuineness and truth of the fourth gospel.

Christ is, that he is the historical and continuous centre of union between God and man, by his own divinely human personality and work; that he is the fixed and living foundation of true faith and virtue and fellowship; the true and living Head of our human family; and his being, life and work not only give us the ground of justifying faith, but the spirit of filial goodness; that by what he suffered and did and is, as well as by what he was, he gave the whole race a new status of faith and power, put us all upon a new footing, and calls us all to reconciliation and atonement, which he has won for us.\* He calls us to

\* It is evident that the nineteenth century is to make its mark upon Christology from its own characteristic point of view, which is the scientific study of facts and laws in the universe. The Nicene theology of the fourth century was vitiated by the Manichean dualism that set nature against God, and made religion discordant with true human life by setting the hermitage above the home. The Roman theology of the twelfth century was vitiated by the same error, ultimated in the supremacy of the priesthood and the sway of ghostly confessors over the human mind. The theology of the Reformation in the sixteenth century was trammelled in Germany by a secular pride that sacrificed catholicity to earthly thrones, and in Geneva by a sharp legalism, that looked upon the Scriptures as a code of arbitrary institutes and in hatred of Rome, failed to see the great currents of divine life that evolved themselves in the historical church. We are called by God to accept Christ as centre of the world's history under universal laws, and to discern his union with the whole providence and method of heaven. This is, in the large sense of the term, the Unitarian or Universal age, and they who are Trinitarians in name feel the great inspiration of the century which compels us to think and work out the unity of nature and religion, reason and revelation, society and the church, time and eternity, and to give hell and the devil far less place in the schemes of God and the destiny of the world than heretofore. One American theologian of orthodox name goes so far as to maintain that hell itself is better than nothing, and is the poorest part of the kingdom of God, and better than no place at all.

God, and if we hear his voice we walk upon an open way, and his truth and life are with us there.

3. This is not all. Our America hears the voice that calls us to man in his higher nature, and to God in his abounding and condescending grace; and more than this, it calls us to the kingdom of heaven, to the life of the eternal good here and evermore. This is the true progress that our striving nature craves, and this is the great consummation to which our best thoughts tend, the perfected and blessed society of the children of God with each other and with Him, the heavenly order which is the end of all Providence and the crown of all creation. Our American mind tends to look at Christianity in this way, as a progressive life in true relations, and not merely as a return to an old Eden or a deliverance from the tortures of a horrible hell. The notion is very prevalent in all quarters, and quite decided with most of our friends, that too much stress is laid upon the individual Adam, his perfection and his fall, and that the whole temple of faith should rest not upon a personage so uncertain and questionable, and according to the Bible so weak in his innocenee and so human in his fall. We can take Father Adam to ourselves, and bless God in Christ for calling us to a higher life and condition than his, and leading his children forward to the kingdom of heaven, and not back to that earthly paradise. Nor need we hold the once popular notion of eternal torments from the terrible judge to give us joy in the eternal life offered by the Beloved Son. Our American mind generally sees no part of God's universe that was made purposely to



inflict torture, and all Christian legislation seeks to correct the criminal more than to torment him. In the American pulpit, too, there is less of an arbitrary hell and more of divine order and its rule, in proportion to the preacher's power and the hearers' intelligence, yet not less call for the preaching of retribution. The offer of progress into new light, life and joy, has its serious and appalling side to them that reject the call and love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They that will not go forward and upward, stay behind and down, and darkness is upon them and with them, here and hereafter; and the strange notion that death is salvation has died out by its own frailty. The most serious preaching in America presents this issue, and they that urge the gospel of the kingdom, not merely as a recall to Adam's estate, or an escape from inflicted torture, or even as a cure for utter depravity, but as an offer of true salvation, the state of heavenly fellowship, the nurture of blessed life; it is they that preach the perils of the great loss most effectively, and to them that will not accept the great gain.

Something of this view of Christianity as the progressive faith appears in all the great religious bodies of the land, and alike in the estimate of man's nature and God's plan in the Incarnation and Atonement. Enlightened and earnest men are preaching the gospel as bread of life, not merely medicine and surgery, and declaring that Christ's work is not only to rebuke sin but inaugurate holiness; not only to correct man but to complete his being, by a salvation that is larger than sin, even as God is larger than the world, the



flesh and the devil. This sentiment is growing and having much to do with the new and genial features of personal piety and church-life in all quarters. We may discover it at work in the prospective reunion of the powerful, earnest, and well-taught Presbyterian bodies, to whom the new school presents brighter views of human ability and larger estimates of the positive work of Christ, as completing nature, as well as rebuking its abuses. Methodism is full of the same great sentiment, and it preaches and sings and prays, that man may use his best free will and carry the gospel of salvation even further than sin is found; up into the heights of the blessed life of perfect love. Our own people have been all aglow with this conviction, and in no American heart did it ever burn more fervently than in Channing, whether in his Easter sermon on the glories of heaven, or in his Lenox address on the emancipation of the slaves in the West Indies, when his eloquence rose into prophecy as he welcomed the new ages of liberty, peace, justice and piety, and declared that the Song of the Angels will not always sound as a fiction. "O come thou kingdom of heaven, for which we daily pray! Come, Friend and Saviour of the race, who didst shed thy blood on the cross to reconcile man to man and earth to heaven."

Too much of the merely material and political spirit has appeared in our visions of the future, and we see now as never before the need of more Christian elements, spiritual faith, and immortal hope in our progress. The war, that we accepted, and which we always deprecated when made upon us, originated

in unchristian tempers, and men like Channing strove to bring liberty without bloodshed, and could have done it, had they been duly sustained by the leaders of the nation. Let our America in her terrible grief see now where her hope lies. She who sung her Magnificat of triumph has since sung her Miserere of agony; the Song of the Angels has been silenced in the clash of arms, and in the battle-cry of brethren who should be one; and the star that led to the cradle of her royal child has been hidden in the darkness that spread over his cross. Let her welcome the angel of the Resurrection and not seek the living among the dead. Let us hear the voice of the Good Shepherd calling us to the kingdom of God. His wounds are ours as never before, and the pathos of our own hearts brings us nearer his passion and its priceless gift.

II. The Shepherd thus speaks to us, and we Americans have heard his *voice*; calling us to know man and God truly, and to discover the kingdom of heaven which makes God and man at one in true communion. Hearing is not the whole of the matter. He is the one Shepherd, and he asks to be *followed* as well as *heard*—to be followed as our Shepherd to his pasture and his fold.

1. Has our America in any earnest sense followed or tried to follow him as the great leader? Has there been among our people any kind of practice of the temper and virtues that are essentially Christ-like? Has there been here any of his meekness, patience, self-sacrifice, any thing of his burning charity, his unflinching courage, the godly wisdom of his Word,

and the godly power of his Spirit? Who will say that there has been none? or who will say that there has been all that there should be?

How much of Jesus, the human example, the Son of Man—may we not say it with gratitude as well as humility—how much of Jesus there has been among the men and women of America! What a contrast between the best heart that has beat in our homes and schools and churches, since the Pilgrims of the Mayflower, the Dutch Calvinists of Manhattan, the Churchmen of Virginia, the Friends of Pennsylvania, and the Catholics of Maryland, first raised their voices here in hymn and prayer, and the heart that before beat in this continent in savage beast and almost as savage man! How many martyrs and saints there have been in America to the Cross, who have lived and died for the true faith, and how many were the godly men and women in the old colony times that planted the rose and myrtle of faith and charity in the howling wilderness and made it a garden of God!

Nor has the new age been wholly wanting in the Christ-like temper. America, in the nineteenth century, does not indeed repeat the spirit of the twelfth or thirteenth century, nor interpret the imitation of Christ wholly after the mind of Thomas à Kempis and his ascetic school; but may there not be the love of God in Christ without monastic severity, poverty, and loneliness? May not God's children live in the world, yet keep from its evil? With all our restless enterprise and love of prosperity, has there not been in our best people a burning desire

to make all enterprise bring out the best strength, and to use prosperity for the welfare of man and the glory of God? Has there not been a largely increasing class of persons of the common lot who live devoutly and humanely, devoted to the best cause, and not tainted by the passion for gain? And is it not clear that among the wealthy and conspicuous, there is a growing number of earnest souls who care less to be rich than to be godly and charitable, and who indicate the rise of a new and exalted class of Americans, who do not desire wealth as the main thing, and who give us our best type of society and put to shame the flashy ostentation and coarse self-indulgence that have been and are too characteristic of our people? Nay, has not the devout life been growing? and is there not an increasing love for the calm and comforting ministry of the church and clergy among the more conservative classes, and a softening of militant passion into filial faith on the part of flaming agitators? What is more memorable than the fact, that reporters have been sent to take down the prayers of our two great liberal reformers, and two books have been the result that will do something to give the devotion of America a place among the litanies of the nations. So here,

The litanies of nations came,  
Like the volcano's tongues of flame.

At the same time the passion for worship shows itself on a grand scale in popular assemblies, and while the old camp-meetings still make the forests ring with



the voices of worshippers, our cities gather thousands of all names and conditions into halls and theatres, where the hymns and prayers are given with as much response as the stirring words of the preacher.

2. How far have we followed our Shepherd in his pasture and faithfully taken and given its nurture?

If labor and thought, and time, and money are proof of Christian piety, then the history of the American Church in the nineteenth century is a constant record of fidelity, for the largest increase of Christian activity in this century has been in our country. How memorable are the simple facts in the leading religious bodies! The Methodists have increased from 15,000 communicants to about 2,000,000; the Baptists from 35,000 to about 1,700,000; the Presbyterians from 40,000 to 700,000; the Congregationalists from 75,000 to 275,000; the Episcopalians have increased to about 170,000 communicants, and the Catholics to about 4,000,000, and the denomination of Christians called Liberal, most conspicuous among them the Unitarians and Universalists, with their popular influence, eloquence and literature, have risen into their position and power as distinct bodies since the century began, although their principles are seen throughout all ages. It is remarkable, that while the population has increased six-fold, the church membership has increased over fourteen-fold, and that while in 1800 there was one communicant to about fifteen of the population, in 1860 there was one to six. Then consider the 54,000 churches, reported in 1860, with their Sunday-schools, missions, and plans of education and charity, direct

and indirect, and who will say that there has been no earnest following of Christ in America? The church of our America is more and more the blessing of the nation, and more and more pervading and purifying social life, and battling with the atheism and sensuality, the license of opinion and practice that are assailing the foundations of the family, and undermining all sacred obligation. Most good works originate among its disciples, and vast is the table, and large the provision of grace and truth, that is set before our people, by the pulpit, press, and literature of Christian America. Probably our work of education and charity has been, with few exceptions, based upon positive Christian principle, and been Christ-like in motive as in effect. One of our own ministers, with hearty co-operation from brethren of all creeds, led the great national charity that carried healing to the sick and wounded of the war, and enlisted helpers and virtues more precious than the 15,000,000 of dollars spent in the service. The spirit of such charity does not die with that emergency, but ranges and rises in manifold beneficence to body and soul.

May we not say that with all our worldliness, there has been a rising of the American mind into a higher plane of thought and a higher tone of action and fellowship in the best classes of our population? Has not our great work of organizing the continent on the basis of freedom and industry, developed a large public spirit that comes near the true enthusiasm of humanity? Has not our thinking under the training of schools and books, of experience and history, of family life and church influence, recognized

more devoutly the need of God as the supreme wisdom, and of his word in Christ as the eternal light? Has not the spirit of beauty taken more full possession of us, and has not true art, in poetry, as in hymns from brethren among our poets, in music, painting, sculpture, gardening, architecture and eloquence, taken a more Christian expression and given promise of the day when God shall be worshipped in the beauty of holiness, and his loveliness shall be adored with his goodness and wisdom?

With all our shortcomings, we surely may cherish high hopes, and God who has been with us in such might, will not desert us in our coming need. In a way that we little know, he may lead us to himself by the one Shepherd, and more and more to us open the inexhaustible riches that are in Christ and the Spirit.

3. But what hope is there of the one fold? Is there any disposition in our nation toward Christian unity, and is the multiplication of sects and strifes to go on without end? There are surely no signs of the speedy consolidation of all denominations of Christians under one official centralized priesthood, nor do our thoughtful and devout men desire any such consummation. Yet to all appearance the disintegrating process has reached its extreme point, and we discern decided tendencies toward virtual union between the members of the several great bodies of Christians most congenial with each other; and the three divisions of our American Christendom, the Ritualists, the Evangelicals, and the Liberals are coming to more or less agreement among themselves, and certainly feel-

ing each other's presence as never before. Meanwhile, throughout all churches sweeps the spirit of the nineteenth century, and calls on all reasonable and earnest men to help reconstruct spiritual society on the basis of free conscience and rational faith. As belonging to the order of Christian Liberals, we look with great interest upon all efforts to bring our characteristic American independence into large and generous Christian fellowship, and rejoice in the many signs of progress that unite personal freedom with universality of faith and charity in religious habits, convictions and institutions. It is clear that we are becoming weary of mere individualism, and because we are conscious that we do not belong to ourselves alone, or to our own families alone, but to civilization, to manhood, and to God, we are ready to recognize other men as belonging to the same great loyalty, and yearning for a due recognition of our place with them in God's kingdom. It is becoming almost a national sentiment, if not, a popular passion, to acknowledge the existence of the great commonwealth of mankind, and our best thinkers are not content to find the commonwealth of mankind outside of the kingdom of God, or to think that the Atlantic cable can make the unity of nations, unless the Spirit of Divine Love send through them its quickening spark. On all sides generous minds are finding each other out, and although church organizations may be expected to continue to draw their lines somewhat as heretofore, there are master-spirits who soar above them and sing in the upper air, the new song of Christian faith and love under the church



universal, fraternal, and filial. You showed the generous temper of your own faith in laying under your corner-stone, side by side with a copy of Channing, a volume of the most gifted and enlarged preacher that Europe has produced in our day, and the light from our eastern window falls on the spot where Robertson and Channing plead here together for God, and Christ, and human kind, and these two leaders of the free conscience of the nineteenth century in death are not divided. And I am glad to say that when the great Christian moralist of Germany, Richard Rothe, died last summer, as soon as his death was known here, a commemorative discourse was preached in our chapel, and your pastor was apparently the only preacher in America to deliver and publish a tribute to this noble light of the evangelical church of Germany.

We need in all proper ways to bring about the union of freedom with universality, and make our worship express the liberty and the charity of the Gospel. The Independents of America to whom we belong, have done much toward this end, and the two branches of Congregationalists have led most of the free and earnest thought and large fellowship so characteristic of Americans for a half century. The end is not yet. Our Christian Liberals instead of settling down upon any mechanical and final organization, are to work out heartily and thoughtfully from their own historical or providential centres, and not doubt that they will draw nearer each other and the universal church of God. Already some of the most cheering aspects of American catholicity are to be

found in the life of free congregations,\* where the worship, the preaching, the work of instruction and charity, give promise of what liberty shall do when

\* Congregationalism is probably the most characteristic and original development of church life in America, and is especially native to our people, although of course it springs from the ancient seed. We keep within its borders, and to-night we consecrate our church edifice in Congregational liberty and fellowship. If we have departed somewhat from the old Puritan ways, our brethren of the straiter sect have gone as far alike in thought and action. It is hard to find freer thinking than in men like Bushnell and Beecher, and it is clear that in church architecture and worship the change has been as great. The most costly and ornate Gothic church building in Boston belongs to Orthodox Congregationalists, and in the parish where, under Dr. Jedediah Morse's ministry, I was baptized in 1812, when a fortnight old, the new sanctuary has a cross on the spire and a chime of sixteen bells within the tower, not at all to the grief of the excellent pastor, Rev. Mr. Miles, and his worthy people. Those cheerful chimes will echo to one occasional pilgrim there the voice of the old baptismal blessing of fifty-five years ago.

Powerful as Congregationalism has been in America, it has shown points of danger which need careful attention, or religious liberty and order will alike suffer. The system works well where the people of the congregation are devout and well bred, and they form an effective alliance with the minister. But in rude or undisciplined communities, the order of the church has suffered and the liberty of the pulpit been invaded by the tyranny of insolent individuals or crude and excitable majorities. The chief danger of our Liberal congregations comes from the neglect of parish affairs by the most cultivated and effective men, and leaving the control to a few persons, who are sometimes made the tools of a coarse capitalist, or tricky politician, or ignorant zealot. We need a more thorough organizing of our congregations on a devotional and practical basis, by which the whole mind of the people may be brought out and also put into vital and wholesome co-operation with the mind of our whole brotherhood. Too often at present the minister is made a mere hireling, with no rights but such as depend upon the promise to pay. Where Christian gentlemen rule, they rule well, and are a law to themselves, but where they do not abound, there is need of church order far more positive than now prevails, or young men of spirit will not enter the ministry, where they are to be brow-beaten by their inferiors.

it mates with faith and love; and free prayer and extemporaneous preaching join with the choir of one or two thousand voices in responsive psalms or choral hymns, to give us some notion of what the ritual of America is to be when her heart comes out, and pulpit and people take and give their due. Everywhere the cry is for a more sympathetic worship, and evidently America has too much life of her own to afford to borrow wholly her religious method from Rome, or Greece, or England. In Christ let us abide, and be sure to abide in his truth that makes free, and be not entangled with any yoke of bondage.

In one respect, new heart is showing itself in our worship, and our people are recognizing the unity of the family of God and taking great comfort in the faith that all of his children belong to one communion of spirit. The sentiment that has opened beautiful cemeteries in every city in the land, and which has broken out in a strange and powerful, and in some respects wild and hurtful movement called spiritualism, has appeared in our churches in a calm and blessed remembrance of the dead, and in time I believe that it will win great power, and draw our people to Christ as the mediator between the visible and invisible world, to enter into his promise, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." Our yearning hearts cry out for our true affinities on earth and in heaven, and will not be comforted by the selfishness or the materialism that says "they are not." Every year chapels, churches, monumental marbles and windows show our love for the dead, and every year we bring myrrh to the altars of Christ, to

make his name fragrant, and embalm in the immortal sweetness the loved ones of our own hearts and homes. With this private affection, a reverential recognition of the great leaders of religion and humanity is gaining ground, and the Scriptures, and all high literature, art, and history, are opening to us the lives of God's august children as perpetual members of our race and continuous powers of his kingdom. Thus in other ways America acknowledges the unity of all true souls, and calls her sons and daughters to the one fold of the one Shepherd. In our own way, we are as a nation to do something for Christendom, and it cannot be that a people that have done so much under God to accommodate and assimilate so many tongues and kindred and races under the auspices of liberty, should have no original mission in religion, and be destined merely to rehearse the old creeds and litanies, and repeat the old feuds, sects, and dynasties of old Asia and Europe. America hears and follows the one Shepherd all the better by coming in her own free and large way into the one fold.

III. I have thus spoken of America's place within the fold, and treated of our acceptance of the idea and the leadership of Christ in hearing his voice and following his call. We must not forget the particular aim of our meditation at this time.

We add now another edifice to the churches of America, and must state in a manly way what this church means in itself, and what relation it claims to the church at large. The honest way is simply to refer to our own history and to rest loyally upon our actual foundation, and be what we are by the provi-



dence of God, alike as Christians and as Liberals. This congregation was established in the year 1826, in simple faith in Christ, by a society of Unitarian Congregationalists, who desired liberty to worship God in the name of Jesus Christ, without being maligned as infidels. We greet here to-night the goodly company of delegates from All Souls Church, or the First Congregational Church\* that preceded ours, over which Rev. William Ware was ordained, December 18, 1821, and rejoice in their good name and prosperity under their present minister, whose absence we regret, and seek to remedy as far as we can by his respected substitute, Rev. Dr. Briggs. We build upon the same foundation as then, and on the same essential faith and freedom, and repeated at our laying the corner-stone the same gospel that Rev. William Ware uttered more than forty years before, at the laying of the corner-stone on Prince and Mercer streets. We hold here together the characteristic

\* The first regular Unitarian preaching in New York city was held April 25, 1819, to about thirty persons, by Dr. Channing, in the house of his sister, Mrs. Russell, when a considerable portion of the hearers were from the Society of Friends. On his return from Baltimore, Dr. Channing preached again, May 16, in the Medical College, Barclay St., and November 15, 1819, the First Congregational Church was incorporated. April 29, 1820, Henry Ware, Jr., laid the corner-stone in Chambers street, and January 20, 1821, Edward Everett preached the dedication sermon. It is well to remember Everett in his early years as preacher, and to believe that it has been his high mission to represent powerfully the old Greek culture in American letters and religion, to breathe so much of beautiful taste and fancy into American life, and save the old humanities from the sweeping proscription of bigots and ascetics. It is, perhaps, worth remembering here that a memorial sermon was preached by the pastor of the Church of the Messiah after his death, on Sunday evening, January 22, 1865, forty-four years after that dedication. The sermon was published under the title of the Patriot Scholar.

doctrine of Christian Unitarians,\* that the Supreme God, our Father in heaven, is to be worshipped in the name of his Son, and that there is unity in the being, aims, and ends of the Godhead. We still hold the principle that Dr. Channing declared in his dedication sermon in 1826, that freedom and faith should be as one, and the soul should be in all ways cheered upward to God, who is true life and eternal blessedness. We speak Channing's name with filial affection here now, and greet cordially our revered and beloved father, who brings his mantle here to-night that he caught from his ascending chariot of fire. How Channing's name has risen before the nation within that forty-two years, and all true Americans at home and abroad are ready to call him their own. Without an impassioned temperament or very sympathetic nature, he was a zealot for the rights of the human mind and the welfare of the race; without being constitutionally of the muscular school of religion, he stood up manfully for fair dealing with the body and the soul; without being a great scholar he was a true sage, and without being a noted philosopher he was a great seer. A reformer without rancor; a patriot

\* As represented by Channing, American Unitarianism has little affinity with the old Unitarianism of Socinus, or of Priestley and Belsham, but it is the most emphatic expression of spiritual liberty and Christian faith among our people. Inwardly it is far more allied to the spiritual doctrines of the Friends than to the semi-materialism of the old English Socinian school. In Germany, Schleiermacher far more adequately represents the Channing movement here, than do any of the usual names that are set up as leading the old European Unitarianism. At present the most earnest and able of our thinkers and writers are more of the Broad-Church type of Robertson, Bunsen and Rothe, than of the narrow, Socinian type.

without clannishness; a conservative without being reactionary; a gentleman without pride of caste; the admiration of aristocratic scholars, yet the friend of the workman and the poor and enslaved; a liberal, but not a demagogue; a recluse thinker without being a dreamer; a statesman, not a politician; a theological leader, not a sectarian; a Christian, and none the less, but all the more, a man; Channing has risen above all mists and clouds into the upper sky of fame, and he shines upon us to-night from the firmament of thought and fidelity. The late Baron Bunsen, in his noted work "God in History," places him among the five Protestant worthies who in his judgment stand pre-eminent as representatives of the Divine presence in man, and thus characterizes him: "In humanity, a Greek, in citizenship a Roman, in Christianity an apostle." "If such a man, whose way of life, in the face of his fellow-Christians, corresponded to the Christian earnestness of his words, and presents a blameless record—if such a one is not a Christian apostle of the presence of God in man, I know of none."

The temple thus dedicated in 1826, had fitting ministers in William Parsons Lunt and Orville Dewey. Dr. Lunt's short and faithful ministry laid the foundation of his mature and honored work at Quincy, Mass., and Dr. Dewey's ministry of fourteen years, in spite of its interruptions by illness, made a mark upon the city and the country. His name and this letter speak for themselves; and with the noble bust in marble in our chapel, from the gifted hand of Ward, help us submit to his absence on professional duty at Baltimore now.

NEW YORK, March 27th, 1868.

*To the Pastor and Brethren of the Church of the Messiah :*

I congratulate you on the completion of the new Church of the Messiah, and desire to bring my felicitations, and the expression of my friendly and pastoral interest, to the occasion of its dedication. I should be with you if I were not obliged, by previous engagement, to go to Baltimore.

I could say much, if I had time, upon this resurrection of the old Church of the Messiah, which was built under my pastorate, and which, for ten years and more, was the centre to me of a life most happy while it was passing, and most precious in recollection. May the glory of the latter house exceed that of the former, not in visible appearance only, but in nurturing the invisible and blessed life of multitudes and generations to come.

Your friend and brother in the Gospel,

ORVILLE DEWEY.

In piety toward God and man we thus consecrate this Church, and reverently associate the old times and the new. Sacredly we cherish the past, not as the chain, but the root of the present and the future. With our best thought, and effort, and affection, we give this temple to God in the name of the Messiah. This building itself is loyal, in its ample accommodation, open spaces, and admirable hearing and speaking qualities, to its predecessor, the old Broadway temple, while true to the higher standard of architecture now prevailing, and creditable to the taste of the architect. In religious expression, too, we sacredly retain the old associations, and our prayers, hymns, chants and ordinances, repeat the old Zion. The old name is in the very fabric of the building, from chapel door to church front, and from cornerstone to cross-crowned roof, so that if we should hold our lips silent, these very stones would cry out and



preach the gospel of our Lord. The old mahogany pulpit stands in our chapel, and its sacred wood whispers to us of the hundred voices of our brethren who preached and prayed at its shrine, and is a bond of communion of the past with the present, the living and the dead. The whole interior is an embodied gospel and a witnessing church. This whole end of the sanctuary, with its pulpit, and font, and table, with its star and anthem of the nativity on the arch; with its word of promise of the spirit from the Master, presents the gospel of God to our souls. The other end of the interior, with its organ, the gift of our good women, and its windows, in memory of the mother and of childhood, represents the great human heart, that should receive the gospel and speak it out in the voices and the lights of home on earth and in heaven. God consummate the union of the two, and bring the gospel and the heart together in this new Church of the Messiah.

In thy Beloved Son and by thy Holy Spirit, Father in heaven, bless this our Church, that we may hear his voice, and be of the one Shepherd and the one fold.

## ADDRESS TO THE CONGREGATION

BY REV. GEORGE W. BRIGGS, D. D.

---

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS: I more than share the universal regret that the older church of our faith in this city speaks to you in these glad services of consecration through a transient occupant of its pulpit, rather than from the lips of its own honored minister, Could he be present now, with all the associations of years of friendship stirring his heart, with all the inspirations of Palestine enkindling his soul, how fitly would he speak the words of fellowship and brotherhood, how glowingly would he utter words of living faith and Christian cheer. Still, though representing his congregation only for the hour, I feel authorized to give you the special congratulations of its members; congratulations expressed with far greater emphasis by the names of its delegates, than by any words of mine. I confidently give you, also, the congratulations of our whole brotherhood of churches; of our ministers and people, all of whom glory in your success, and rejoice in your joy. It is always an occasion of true joy, indeed, to see a new temple, enriched by art, by whatever may delight the eye, or charm the taste,

as well as speak to worshipping hearts to quicken the religious sentiment and life, consecrated to Christian worship. We would carry the Gospel to the poorest, and pour its life-giving influences around them all, as freely as God sends the air and the light to all alike. Let there be places whose doors open so widely, that they seem to speak to men with the universal, loving invitation of Jesus to the multitudes; places, halls, theatres, groves, whatever they may be, yet made churches for the hour, because living men stand in them to speak God's everlasting truth to needy, suffering, sinning brother souls. God be thanked for every true attempt to draw together those who have no Christian home; to meet them on the broad platform of a common humanity. But the religious sentiment delights also to raise the massive temple, and the costly altar. It was the impulse of devotion, as well as the divine command, that made the vessels of the ancient worship of pure gold. The deepest penitence brought the precious ointment to Jesus to pour it upon his feet. Pride rears splendid shrines; exalting itself even by what it claims to raise for the worship of God. But devotion builds them also; seeking by the costly gifts of earth, to express its reverence for the priceless truths of Heaven. Beautify the sanctuary of God; make the place of his worship glorious, if prosperity enables you to bring such splendid offerings. All the resources of taste and art, all the gifts of genius, or of wealth, fulfil their highest office when they can add a single charm to human worship, or help to deepen the impression of religious truths.

But I confess for myself to-night. I venture to express for our whole brotherhood, another and peculiar joy in the occasion and the hour. Brethren, friends of this congregation, in the erection of this fair temple you have given a new, an emphatic expression of your devotion to that general, liberal faith which we hold to be so priceless. It is a matter of profoundest interest to all of us elsewhere, to have this faith conspicuously assert itself in this great metropolis, through the churches which it rears for its worship, and the living voices that expound and unfold it. It should assert itself here and everywhere with unfeigned humility, with inexhaustible charity, but still with unwavering confidence. The time has gone by for it to plead for recognition as a part of Christendom. It came into existence in the providential development of religious thought. Though our churches have been comparatively so few in numbers, our general faith has done much to influence other communions. We arrogate nothing to our own special branch of the general Liberal Church. There are other liberal communions besides our own, whose representatives we gratefully welcome, in our glad waiting for the hour, so surely coming, in which the natural tendencies of thought shall obliterate every seeming separation, and bring them and us into an unbroken fellowship. Old creeds have put on a new aspect; former dogmas have received a new interpretation, since these liberal communions have sprung into being. The ideas of Channing are moulding men's opinions far and wide. Though dead, he still speaks more powerfully than even by his living, thrill-



ing words. We point to the consecrated names of those once ministering at our altars, here and elsewhere, whom all men now acknowledge as saintly. All sects recognize them as belonging to the true, spiritual, universal Church, now they have ascended, though fellowship was denied to them while they lived. The Liberal Church needs no longer to plead for recognition, or apologize for its own existence. Its past history and influence, its venerated names, are its sufficient vindication. It only needs that its adherents should be true to it—true to its ideas, and to its spirit, to make its future grander, mightier than its past.

First, it needs that men should be true to its ideas. You do not set apart this church, friends, to a negative, but to a positive faith. Liberal Christianity is not a mere denial of others' creeds. It is positive in a glorious sense of the term. If I were to define its purpose and character, I should say it is an attempt to grasp and present the essential, fundamental ideas of religious faith, separated from all alloy of human speculation. If Liberal Christianity exposes the "errors of orthodoxy," it is in order to discover and enforce its truths. Everywhere it demands the central, vital, spiritual, positive thought. There is a spiritual, vital faith respecting God, for example, which is no metaphysical abstraction, no speculation of the intellect, but a sublime conception of one living spirit of perfect love, manifested not only in threefold, but in myriad ways; revealed in nature; imaged in Jesus, and in every transfigured type; appearing in this eternal Providence; present to inspire every true

desire and thought. It is a conception too sublime for us to grasp; whose grandeur awes, but whose beauty subdues and charms; in whose glorious fulness all little separate faiths are included, as single drops in the boundless sea; one grand, majestic, incomprehensible, eternal, blessed presence, that in the sweet words of Jesus we would call OUR FATHER, till every question of the intellect, or of the heart, shall give place to trust, and every fear be cast out by love.

So, too, there is a comprehensive, spiritual conception respecting Jesus, which recognizes him as especially manifesting the heart, the love of God; for there can be no such manifestation of a living God as in a living soul—none so bright as that in the divinest soul; which recognizes him also as manifesting the true life for man; as showing that man is capable of receiving the divinest life; that humanity in its true estate becomes one with divinity, and that every true son of man is a true son of God.

So, once more, there is a grand spiritual idea respecting the words of Jesus, which regards them as the axioms of the spiritual universe, the fundamental laws of the soul's life; not resting even upon his authority, but true in the nature of things; so that, for example, when he says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," apprehend the infinitely pure; or when he announces any other law of his kingdom, we hear a statement which we see to be as undeniably true as the axioms of mathematics.

It is these spiritual, fundamental religious ideas, which prove themselves when held up in their divine simplicity; it is this sublimely positive faith which

Liberal Christianity, in all the phases of its manifestation, really seeks. The world can poorly spare the churches that unfold it. In the confusion of its speculations, amidst its superstitions, and its scepticisms, the world needs nothing so much as to recognize one central idea of the Liberal faith; the idea, that there is an indestructible foundation for religious faith in the soul of man, and that the teachings of Jesus are the statement of the eternal facts of spiritual truth. What fear then of a lasting "Eclipse of Faith?" What wonder is it that Jesus said, "Though heaven and earth pass, not one jot or tittle of my words shall fail!" Bold are the assumptions of science. But what can science, in its explorations of these material worlds, do to unsettle the eternal laws of the spiritual nature? There are truths far older than those of science; older than the universe which science explores. Before the earth and the heavens were made, "in the beginning was the word with God." It shall remain the same when the earth and the heavens have been taken down.

Warring with none, welcoming fellowship with all, in the interests of a spiritual, positive faith, that feels itself to be standing on the abiding foundations, yet strives to be perfectly loving and free, you have set apart this building to its sacred uses. God help you to make it the representative of a religion that is at once rational, and spiritual, and cheerful, with all the vitality, and might of love.

Let it represent a rational religion, obedient to the words of Jesus, "Why, even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"—a religion which remembers

how terribly the mind has erred, yet which will not therefore quench the human reason, or ignore it, but seek, rather, to purify it, believing that the lowly, seeking soul can learn of the doctrine; believing in the presence of the divine Spirit to give wisdom, light, inspiration to loyal, asking hearts.

Let it represent a truly spiritual religion; a religion which does not neglect observances and forms, though they so often disgust when they become substitutes for life, or are converted into fetters to cramp Christian liberty; but which secures hours of consecration to stimulate to hours of work; and in its acceptance or rejection of ceremonies, only seeks that which most surely helps to fill the heart with the life of God.

Let it represent a cheerful faith; cheerful, not lax; for the laws of spiritual life are as immutable as the laws of nature; cheerful, not thoughtless, for consecration is profoundly serious. The tasks of love and self-sacrifice are serious. Every thoughtful view of life is serious. Still a true faith remembers the joy of existence also. Nature laughs in sunshine and in flowers. Jesus was at marriage-feasts. Let faith be cheerful, for this world is our Father's house, upheld, lighted, adorned, filled by his perfect love. We are not alone, for he is with us always; and with that sublime assurance, how can faith be any thing but joy?

Once more, let this church represent a living religion. You desire to set this building apart to the *ideas* of a liberal faith. But you desire, still more devoutly, to set it apart to the cultivation and



diffusion of the *spirit* of such a faith. We do not talk of works alone, as so many say. We believe also in faith. But it is a faith in grand, life-giving ideas. We believe in a conception of God that once embraced, inevitably enkindles love. Faith in his forgiveness leads to consecration; impelling us to bring our alabaster box, with its costly offering, to pour it out in loving service. The idea of his fatherhood demands that we should open our arms in the spirit of universal brotherhood. Every truly Christian idea has an electric power to quicken the hand and heart to new activity and love. How profoundly Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The life of God in the soul of man must spontaneously imitate the activity of him whose inspiration it is. You do not build this Church simply that you may come here and worship. It bears the name of the Church of the Messiah. If it is to *be* a Church of the Messiah, it will be a place in which men and women will gather to ask themselves what they can do for those for whom Jesus himself would work, were he here striving to seek, and save those that are lost; a place in which to gain the spirit that will inspire them to undertake such divine ministries of mercy. What can you do, here in this great city, at this day and hour, to instruct its ignorant masses; to reclaim its fallen; to rescue its neglected, or worse than orphaned children; to act the part of angels to those in peril of perdition? What can you do to save this metropolis, made so splendid by the glories of civilization, yet reeking with abominations that are its unutterable shame? These are the questions that ought

to ring through these Churches, above the sound or liturgies, or the clash of warring creeds, until, even before they bring their gifts to the altar, the worshippers should strive to rescue their perishing brothers. All true Christian worship does its work when the soul is filled with the one question: What it can do to save others? For the man that loses his own life in such Christ-like love, will inevitably find it. You dedicate this Church, I trust, to Christian work, as well as to Christian faith; to such Christian work as the needs and sins all around it demand, and God gives you power to do. You set it apart to Christian ideas for the one purpose of creating, inspiring this Christian life. Thanks be given that the world is fast coming to regard, not devotion to forms and creeds, but consecration to ministries of love, and deeds of sacrifice, as the realization of discipleship, the ideal of saintship to-day. Every other heresy will be forgiven except the heresy of a selfish and unchrist-like life. Show us the print of the nails upon the hands and the feet, the tokens of a living, suffering love—is the cry coming up louder and louder every day—or we shall never believe that Jesus is here. Fruitless worship begins to receive the contempt which it merits. Earnest, Christian men, speaking in the inspiration of living faith, only intend to pour the love of Jesus himself into human hearts, to lift human nature everywhere out of its degradation and its sins, and to set it in heavenly places; whether acknowledged or excommunicated by ecclesiastical communions, these will be honored by humanity as the true spiritual powers, the Apostolic succession, recognized and ordained of God.

Brethren, the consecration of a Church is not a form. It should be the re-consecration of all those whose hands joined in its erection; of all who propose to become worshippers at its altar. All its beauty is dim in comparison with the beauty of the life in the true souls that may gather here. You can consecrate it, friends, by your devotion and your love, and make it the house of God, the gate of heaven. Ye are the temple of God, if his spirit dwelleth in you. Church of the Messiah; consecrated, inspiring name; a place in which to unfold the mind of Jesus, and, as God gives you grace, to attain his life. Unfold his mind, attain his life, and you will ensure the victory of his Gospel. Once more I give you the congratulations of our Liberal fellowship. May the prayer of this hour be answered, and its hopes be abundantly realized. May the consecration of this church, and of your own souls, be accepted above. For my brethren's and companions' sake, I say, "Peace be within these walls," now and forevermore.

# APPENDIX.

## I.

### ORDER OF SERVICES

AT THE

## Consecration of the Church of the Messiah,

CORNER 34th STREET & PARK AVENUE,

NEW YORK,

Thursday Evening, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$  o'clock, April 2, 1868.

I. Voluntary on the Organ.

II. Sentences, by the Minister and People.

(Congregation Stand.)

*Minister.* Our help is in the name of the Lord,

*People.* Who made heaven and earth.

*Minister.* Blessed be the name of the Lord,

*People.* From henceforth even forever.

*Minister.* I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into  
the house of the Lord,

*People.* Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!

*Minister.* Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

*People.* They shall prosper that love thee.

*Minister.* Peace be within thy walls,

*People.* And prosperity within thy palaces.

*Minister.* For my brethren and companions' sake I will now  
say, Peace be within thee.



*People.* Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good.

*Minister.* The law was given by Moses,

*People.* But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

*Minister.* This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God,

*People.* And Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.

*Minister.* Praise ye the Lord.

*People.* The Lord's name be praised.

### III. Anthem, Jubilate Deo.

(Congregation remain Standing.) Music, J. R. Thomas.

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness, and come before His presence with a song.

Be ye sure that the Lord he is God; it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

O go your way into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him and speak good of His name.

For the Lord is gracious, His mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth from generation to generation.

Glory be to the Father, Almighty God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

### IV. Act of Consecration.

(Pause for Silent Prayer.)

*Minister.* Brethren of the Ministry and People of the Congregation, let us rise and Consecrate this Church with our united voices.

*Ministers and People.* To the worship of God our Father in heaven, to the grace and truth of His Son, to the communion of His Holy Spirit, to peace on earth and good will to men, to salvation from sin and to the life eternal, we devote this sanctuary and consecrate this Church of the Messiah. Amen.

### V. Prayer of Consecration.

Rev. E. S. Gannett, D. D.

## VI. Sacred Song.

Holmes.

O Love Divine, that stooped to share  
 Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear,  
 On Thee we cast each earth-born care,  
 We smile at pain while Thou art near!

Though long the weary way we tread,  
 And sorrow crown each lingering year,  
 No path we shun, no darkness dread,  
 Our hearts still whispering, Thou art near!

## VII. The Holy Scriptures.

1. Old Testament. 1 Kings viii. 22-30. Rev. A. P. Putnam.

*Choir.* Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, through Jesus Christ, forever and ever. Amen.

2. New Testament. John xvii. Rev. E. H. Chapin, D. D.

## VIII. Consecration Hymn.

William C. Bryant. Music, Edward Howe, Jr.

O Thou, whose own vast temple stands,  
 Built over earth and sea,  
 Accept the walls that human hands  
 Have raised to worship Thee.

Lord, from thine inmost glory send,  
 Within these courts to bide,  
 The peace that dwelleth, without end,  
 Securely by thy side.

May erring minds that worship here  
 Be taught the better way,  
 And they who mourn, and they who fear,  
 Be strengthened as they pray.

May faith grow firm and love grow warm,  
 And pure devotion rise,  
 While round these hallowed walls the storm  
 Of earth-born passion dies.

## IX. Sermon.

Rev. Samuel Osgood, D. D.

## X. Solo.

From Handel's Messiah.

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.

He shall gather the lambs with His arm,

And carry them in His bosom,

And shall gently lead those that are with young.

## XI. Address to the Congregation.

Rev. George W. Briggs, D. D.

## XII. Congregational Hymn.

Nuremberg. (All will Join.)

On thy church, O Power Divine,

Cause thy glorious face to shine.

Till the nations from afar

Hail her as their guiding star;

Till her sons, from zone to zone,

Make Thy great salvation known.

Then shall God, with lavish hand,

Scatter blessings o'er the land;

Earth shall yield her rich increase,

Every breeze shall whisper peace,

And the World's remotest bound

With the voice of praise resound.

## XIII. Lord's Prayer.

Minister and People.

## XIV. Benediction.

## XV. Amen.

Choir.

## Historical Memoranda.

Church on corner of Prince and Mercer Streets, dedicated December 7, 1826, as the Second Congregational Unitarian Church, and Dr.

CHANNING preached the sermon.

Rev. WILLIAM P. LUNT, D. D., settled June 19, 1828.

Rev. ORVILLE DEWEY, D. D., settled November 8, 1835.

Church of the Messiah, Broadway, consecrated May 2, 1839.

Rev. SAMUEL OSGOOD, D. D., installed October 3, 1849.

Church of the Incarnation on Madison Av. and 28th St., occupied from Sept., 1864, to May, 1867.

The corner-stone of the present edifice was laid October 3, 1866.

---

The First Congregational Church in Chambers Street (Rev. WILLIAM WARE and Dr. H. W. BELLOWES, Pastors,) was dedicated January 20, 1821, and Rev. EDWARD EVERETT preached the sermon.

---

## II.

### THE PRAYER OF SENEX.

FROM MASSACHUSETTS, FOR NEW YORK.

(Received by mail from Medford, Mass., without name, after the Consecration.)

Our lowly dwellings suit our lowly lot,  
The rural mansion and the humble cot;  
But the Lord's House to nobler heights should rise,  
Its lofty turrets mingling with the skies.

Round the home-altar child and parent kneel,  
Their hopes to brighten and their wants to feel;  
But at this shrine all families in one,  
Would seek the Father through his holy Son.

At the home-table they who take their seat,  
Only receive earth's perishable meat;  
But at the table which the Lord hath spread,  
All souls believing eat the "living bread."

This house, this altar, and this table too,  
We give to GOD, the Great; to CHRIST, the True;  
But, above all, to Them ourselves we give;  
With them to labor, and in them to live.



## III.

(From the Christian Register.)

## EASTER IN NEW YORK.

The usual Easter services were held in the new Church of the Messiah in New York, and ample proof was given that old friends and the public had found their way to the new edifice. At ten o'clock in the morning a number of children were baptized at the new and beautiful marble font, over which the pastor said a few words of benediction before giving it to its sacred service.

The morning service followed the usual order, and begun with the Easter Anthem, "Christ our Passover," and was cheered by the voice of the fine organ, now just complete, and by the charming array of flowers in the chancel, which were never more profuse and exquisite. A large Greek floral cross hung in front of the pulpit, with a centre of red camelias, and rose above a large basket of flowers which bore in red carnations in the centre the letters I. H. S. Each of the heavy chancel chairs was surmounted by a combined cross, anchor and heart of rich design, whilst in front stood two massive pyramids of roses, lilies, &c., on pedestals.

The font was crowned with a cone of conspicuous flowers, among them some magnificent callas, and bore in front of the shaft a floral cross of camelias, roses, and violets, which was ordered by a mother on Friday morning, in memory of a daughter, who died that very night. Rich baskets of flowers were set within the chancel, and stars and other emblems in flower-work were hung upon the chancel-rail. The preacher's large chair in the pulpit bore a rich floral cross above the word Messiah which is carved upon the wood. Much heart was shown, as usual, in these gifts which were so abundant, and whilst on the previous Saturday flowers were not to be had in the city for money, the products of several private green-houses were put at the service of our ladies.

It snowed in the afternoon, yet the attendance of children and friends was large at the festival, and the usual good spirit prevailed. Dr. Osgood conducted the services, and gave a short sermon on "The Mind, a Garden—and how to plant it." The scholars all received an Easter gift, and the large Bible-class of the pastor were favored by photograph copies of a new and admirable picture of

Mary and the Risen Saviour, which were sent from Paris for the occasion by a parishioner there. Interesting memorial gifts were assigned to families that had been bereaved, and a handsome Scripture engraving was sent to the church of Dr. Gilman in Charleston, in remembrance of him, with an Easter gift of fifty dollars for the purchase of books for the Sunday-school there. A host of little children came up for picture cards, whilst the hymn "See Israel's gentle Shepherd stand" was sung. Thus closed this twelfth Easter Festival of Youth in this congregation.

In the evening, in spite of a driving snow-storm, the church was filled, and the services, scripture, music and sermon were of a memorial character. The new organ was highly satisfactory, and the Odell Brothers have no reason to be ashamed of this their chief work, which is delightful in its union of sweetness and power.

The building is unusually satisfactory as to its convenience and beauty. For speaking and hearing it is remarkable, and notwithstanding the high ceiling and large ground, it is as easy for the voice as a common parlor, and a conversational tone from the pulpit can be heard in every part of the auditorium. The congregation, parents and children, with one voice consecrated the building, and resolved with God's help to stand by the cause so identified with their history for over forty years.

---

#### IV.

##### GIFTS TO THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH.

1. Massive communion service of Etruscan pattern: two flagons, six cups, three plates, from communicants some time since.

2. Marble bust of Rev. Dr. Dewey, by J. Q. A. Ward, from a number of friends.

3. First class organ of great compass, sweetness and power, by Odell & Brother, from the ladies of the congregation.

4. Communion table of black walnut and butternut, with rich carving of the Christ child, and the words, "Come ye unto me," between two crosses made of an olive branch from the Garden of Gethsemane, from a gentleman. The olive branch from the pastor.

5. Six alms plates of black walnut, with inscriptions in raised letters from the words of Christ, thus:—1. Blessed are the merci-

ful. 2. The poor ye have always. 3. Lay up treasure in heaven. 4. To my brethren as to me. 5. God so loved the world. 6. Sick and ye visited me. The last of these plates was given by a Christian wife and mother, Mrs. Hervey Brown, the evening before her death. One of the plates was the gift of an English friend, a descendant of the old Hollis family.

6. The pulpit of black walnut and butternut, with carving, from three gentlemen.

7. Books for the pulpit. Large Oxford bible, smaller bible, two service books, two hymn books, Cruden's Concordance, all bound in red morocco and gold, from a gentleman.

8. Wilton carpet, in maroon and orange, for the chancel, from a gentleman.

9. Massive baptismal font, of Italian marble, with the inscription in raised letters, "Abide in me and I in you." Three hundred dollars of the cost from a gentleman, and two hundred dollars from Mr. T. J. Coleman, partner in See & Co's marble works.

10. The large rose window, sixteen feet in diameter, opposite the pulpit, with dove, clouds, stars, vines, lilies and passion-flowers, expressive of Christian womanhood, and surmounted by the first verse of the Magnificat, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," a masterly work of Henry Sharp, from a gentleman, in memory of his mother and sister.

11. Two small rose windows, by the same artist, bearing heads of the Angel of the Nativity and of the child Jesus, with the inscriptions, "The angel said, fear not; I bring you glad tidings," and "Suffer little children to come unto me," from a gentleman, in memory of twin children.

12. Two massive chairs of black walnut and butternut, with velvet seats, for the chancel, from two sisters.

13. A massive chair for the pulpit, of original design, with the word Messiah carved on the back, from a gentleman.

14. Cover for the font, of black walnut, with flowers and cross in bronze, in memory of a mother and daughter.

15. Chest for alms for the vestibule, of black walnut and butternut, with heavy brass mountings, from a gentleman.

16. Gown of silk for the pulpit, from one of the pastor's Bible class.

## V:

DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW CHURCH OF THE  
MESSIAH.

The Church presents a front, on 34th Street, of 75 feet, and a depth, on Park Avenue, of 125 feet, twenty-five feet of which are taken for the width of the chapel, leaving the Church proper 100 feet deep. The depth of the chapel is 80 feet. The original design contemplated two spires, one 20 feet square by 180 feet high, and the other 16 feet square by 125 feet high. The foundations of these spires have been built in one solid square mass of cement and stone to the level of the ground, upon these temporary turrets have been built, so as to give a finished appearance to the edifice, leaving the erection of the spires to the future. The front has a porch of three archways with granite steps. The arches are supported by eight columns with elaborately-carved capitals of original, and each of different design, representing Christian emblems and studies from natural foliage, lilies, ivy, ears of wheat, grapevines, grapes, olives, thistles, passion-flowers, &c. One of the centre capitals has a beautifully-sculptured representation of a pelican feeding her young from her own body, as emblematic of true Christian love and self-sacrifice. The group seems nestled under a cluster of white lilies, the large leaves of which appear to shelter the pelican. On the opposite and corresponding capital is sculptured a dove and olive leaves, the emblem of the holy spirit and peace. On the face of the outer arches are the inscriptions, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," The Church of the Messiah (and under it), "This is my beloved Son, hear him," and on the third arch, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Over the inner or entrance arches are the inscriptions, "Seek and ye shall find," "Lo! I am with you alway," and the third, "Hallowed be thy name." Above the porch is a rose window 16 feet in diameter, and at the apex of the front there is a cross 22 feet high inclusive of its base or plinth. The arms of the cross seem to be within a ring, the emblem of eternity. The approach to the nave is through a vestibule 10 feet deep and 40 feet in width. At the ends of the vestibule, and in the turrets, are spacious stairs leading to the galleries. The nave has 928, and the galleries



300 seats. There are no columns in the nave, the galleries being supported by brackets. The galleries are 13 feet in width by the depth of the nave, 80 feet. The easterly end gallery is used entirely by the choir and organ. The organ occupies a space of 40 by 12 feet, at each end a space of 12 feet square is encased. The intermediate space is filled with large pipes exposed to view; and all will be richly decorated. On each case is a cluster of a fine-carved lyre, bugles and palm-tree branches. In the centre panel of the wood-work of the organ gallery front is an allegorical sculptured emblem of music, representing an angel upon clouds, playing the harp. The chapel being at the rear of the church, and the space being limited, prevented the construction of a recessed sanctuary or chancel; instead of being recessed it was built into the nave, and partly formed by a tabernacle with columns supporting a triumphal arch, intended as symbolical of the triumph of Christ, and is surmounted by a cross at the apex. On the arch is the inscription: Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to all men. The base of the tabernacle is about 10 feet high, its upper mouldings are surmounted by ornaments of natural foliage, the lilies largely predominating, besides studies of morning-glory, ivies and passion-flowers. Behind these flowers are gas jets to light the pulpit. The columns which support the arch have sculptured capitals with heads of a cherub, lion, ox and eagle, the symbols of the four evangelists. Under the arch of the tabernacle is the altar and pulpit, both worked harmoniously into each other as if intended to present an altar and super-altar; the face of the pulpit is panelled to form a cross with an ornamental monogram of I. H. S. The centre panel of the altar is richly ornamented by sculptured work, representing Christ as an infant, holding a cross in one hand, and the other hand resting upon a globe. Upon the globe are the outlines of the continent, and the words North America. All is surrounded by a wreath of grapes, vines, and ears of wheat, and the inscription: Come ye unto me. In the two side-panels of the face of the altar, small crosses have been formed by pieces of olive brought from Jerusalem by a friend of the pastor who took the olive branch from the garden of Gethsemane.

The whole sanctuary is enclosed by a railing. The roof is unsupported by columns, but is trussed, resting entirely upon the

side walls and buttresses. The ceiling is at its highest point 54 feet above the floor, and is moulded with ribs to indicate, as much as possible, the construction of the roof. It terminates at the side walls in a large cove, and resting upon a cornice, and all seems supported by large sculptured corbels. On the face of these corbels are winged cherubs with olive branches; the sides have panels with water lilies; the corbels are surmounted with a gas fixture of original design, representing a large white lily. On the top of the sluice cornice, along the entire side walls, are jets of gas with star burners, about 6 inches apart, lighting the church entirely from the ceiling, leaving no glaring lights near the eyes of the audience.

The exterior is faced with stone from quarries at Nyack, on the Hudson; the light-colored stone used in the ornamental work and trimmings, is from quarries near Cleveland, Ohio, and all resting upon a base of Quincy granite. The architecture is in the German Round Gothic or Rhenish style. The rose window, over the organ, is a striking feature of beautiful design, a dove in the centre represented as descending from the clouds, and the divisions on the outer circumference are richly ornamented with ecclesiastical emblems and flowers. In the turrets, at each side of the organ, are pictorial windows with cherubs, which, with the rose window, were presented as memorials; they were designed and executed by Mr. Sharp. The woodwork of the interior is of black walnut and butternut. All of the work was done under the supervision of a building committee, composed of the following-named gentlemen: John Babcock, Dexter A. Hawkins, Richard Warren, Robert M. Field, and John H. Macy, with the pastor, Dr. Osgood, as advisory member, without a vote.

The cost of the edifice was \$160,000. The painting of the tabernacle and the woodwork of the altar and pulpit, also the decorating of the organ, was done by Messrs. J. I. & R. Lamb. The masonry, by John T. Conover. The plastering, by the Power Bros. The carpenter work, by Messrs. Jennings & Brown. The stone cutting and porch, by Messrs. Jacques & Mooney. The sculptured work, by Mr. E. Plassman (of Plassman's School of Art, 6th Av., near 9th St.). The organ was built by Messrs. J. H. & C. S. Odell, 165 7th Av. The upholstery work is by Doremus & Nixon. Mr. Carl Pfeiffer is the architect.









