CHRISTMAS.

Churchly Commemoration of the Coming of Christ.

PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN.

Songs of Love and Adoration---Sermons Full of Counsel and Admonition.

Handsome Decorations—Delightful Music—Eloquent Discourses.

Religious Observance of the Festival in the Metropolis and Elsewhere.

The great festival of Christianity—Christmas—was honored yesterday with all the pomp, circumstance and surroundings that could add brilliancy and beauty to the houses of divine worship. When "the brazen tongue of clamorous time" announced the arrival of day chimes of joyful notes rang out upon the air, announcing to the world the "glad tidings of great joy" which were brought them.

In all the churches the gifts of nature in flowers and evergreens added to the artistic array of lights, and accompanied by songs of joy and praise, gave full expression to the gladness of the Christian hearts. It may be safely said that the festival was more universally religiously honored yesterday than it has been in many years. The churches were more numerously attended, the services, if possible, more solemn, the sermons more forcible and the general observance more appropriate. Below will be found reports of the services and sermons, which are somewhat out of the ordinary run, and will be found to be both interesting and instructive.

CHURCH OF ALL SOULS.

A Christmas Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Bellows—Popery and Paganism—An Interview Between Our Lord and the Pope.

A fashionable congregation gathered yesterday morning at this temple of liberal Christianity, who were bent on hearing a Christmas sermon. A merry Christmas! What a bright Christmas morning! Such were the greetings that passed between those who met at the church doors, and when these exclamations emanated from the female owner of a pair of bright eyes, a musical voice and a countenance beaming with youth and beauty, it warmed the heart of the youthful gallant (we suppose the case) to whom it was addressed and made him think that it was a bright Christmas morning indeed.

The pastor of the church—the Rev. Dr. Bellows—is the possessor of a highly intelligent countenance, which bespeaks the sympathy of his hearers, and he seems to have all the qualifications and acquirements that make a popular preacher. His eloquence is of the highest order and flows with ease and naturalness. He

NEVER AIMS AT SENSATION,

but rivets the attention of the congregation by his quiet earnestness and faultless elocution. The theme of his interesting discourse was based on Luke, 18, viii.—"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on earth?" He began thus:—It seems probable that the Apostles and their immediate successors really expected that Jesus Christ would soon return to the earth, to judge the world and to establish a visible kingdom. But learned and thoughtful men, as a rule, have long ago abandoned this fantastic expectation as not in accordance with the general plan of God's providence. More and more has it appeared that the Gospel was designed by God, its author, to work slowly and by various methods—not in the erection of a triumphant establishment called "the Church," not in the magnification and

DEIFICATION OF THE NAME OF CHRIST;

but in the interest and service of humanity and the improvement of the race in intelligence, virtue and happiness. It is by putting everything in a new light, continued the speaker, adding new motives and new meanings to all the permanent offices and necessities of human life, that Christianity slowly and surely elevates, enlarges and transforms the earth and its people. Bring an average heathen and an average Christian together at the gates of the Hellespont, where Christianity and heathenism still stand opposed, and place before them a Circassian slave. What is it that each sees as he looks upon the human creature exposed in the slave market? Thank God that we cannot to-day find an instance nearer home! The heathen sees nothing shocking in putting this image of God up for sale. She is no image of God to him. She is fair to see, and will not some turbaned merchant take her to an indolent home of luxury and pleasure and make her his plaything? But what is the Christian thinking of as he stands close by her side? Here, beneath all that this brutal, blinded heathen sees, beneath this blushing face, these exposed limbs, is a human soul, a moral and spiritual being, a child of God, a possible disciple of Christ. What can exhibit the transformation of humanity under Christian influence more than the revolution of sentiment in respect to the true worth of every human being, independent of sex, age, color and clime? Supposing the dream of the Second Adventists realized in the

ACTUAL PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF JESUS CHRIST,

on this His eighteen hundred and seventieth birthday, here upon the earth to answer His own question, "When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on earth?" What would be His verdict? Imagine Him calling in person to-day at St. Peter's, in Rome, upon the Holy Father. He would find him who claims to be His official representative and Vicar on earth borne high on the shoulders of men in his sacred chair, amid a procession of priests clad in purple, with a grand and gorgeous array of ecclesiastical pomp, with incense smoking and thousands of people prostrate as before a coming God; and as he puts on his triple crown, sparkling with diamonds, let

THE NAZARENE IN HIS JEWISH GABARDINE,

with naked feet and bare head, walk up to the grand altar where His real blood and body are about to be eaten and drunk, and hold a public conference with his alleged Vicar on the condition and prospects of his religion in the world. What will the Pope say about "the faith on earth" which his Divine Master is in quest of? He must needs complain that his estates, his power and influence had dwindled since the triumphant day for the Church when the Pontiff's foot was on the neck of kings, until one of the second rate monarchs, the King of Italy, was strong enough to drive him out of the small remnant of his temporal dominion and shut him up in a mile square in the Leonine City. Somehow—he must needs say under the inspiration of the devil—men had got it into their wicked heads that Church and State were very much in each other's way and must be divorced. Somehow the world had come to the infamous conclusion that the Church was simply a Church

ROMAN AND NOT UNIVERSAL,

and so had profanely refused to entertain the exclusive right of his infallibility, and that in consequence Protestantism had sprung up; that

THIS WRETCHED ANTICHRIST

had already abolished kings and popes, orders of nobility and rights of primogeniture in America, and was fast spreading its social and political heresies over Europe and Asia. His excommunications, before which emperors once trembled, without power to frighten a well taught child; his declaration of infallibility, the laughter of Christendom. Is not the Vicar of Christ bound to say to his great Original that his influence is failing in the world; that "the faith" is in decay and "the Church" in ruins? Would Jesus Christ believe him? Let the Son of Man turn from this great

REPRESENTATIVE OF CHURCH MILLINERY

to the people for whom He died. Let Him call the nations to His sacred feet—a hundred million souls—with the open Bible in their hands and hearts; nay, let the

COMMON SCHOOLS OF AMERICA

gather around His radiant person, the intelligent, cheerful enlightened faces of the myriads who could repeat the main facts of His own history, the Lord's Prayer, the table of commandments, and who know the geography of the Holy Land and the history of persecuted countries! Let all this be presented to the Son of Man as an offset, a vindication of His cause, against the official doubts and

ALARMS OF THE PAPACY.

World not Jesus Christ say, Now is the Son of Man glorified; He has found faith on the Earth on His coming? America is among Christian nations what the Jews were among the pre-Christian nations. American Christianity may have been narrow, needing more light, but it was pure from the start, and it had a virgin hemisphere to start in. What religion we have in America we mean shall be practical. We want our Christianity in our hearts and lives, in our trade and commerce, in our politics and pleasures. The English church, so free and noble at one end, so superstitious and heathen at the other; the Roman Church, so pagan in what it deems its most Christian part, but Christian only in its good works and its love of the poor—these are striving to resist or supplant the native Christianity of the land; but their efforts will not avail.

The reverend gentleman concluded with this blessing:—"God bless the life that communicates itself as all from Him who this day, eighteen hundred and seventy years ago, was born a babe in Bethlehem!"

THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH.

Sermon by Rev. Chauncey Giles—God's Friendship for Poor Humanity as Shown in the Creation—Christ's Incarnation and Infinite Love for Fallen Men.

The followers of Emanuel Swedenborg, and many others, yesterday morning crowded the Tabernacle, in Thirty-fifth street, near Lexington avenue, to listen to the Christmas services of the pastor, Rev. Chauncey Giles. The church was plainly but tastefully decorated with evergreens, and the congregation in attendance was quite large. The pastor took for his text Luke ii., 10 and 11—"Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." In these words the angels announced to

THE AWED AND TREMBLING SHEPHERDS

the grandest event in human history—the coming of Jehovah on the earth. The fulness of time had come; the goal of all prophecy was reached; the preparation of the ages now culminated in a complete work; the divine became embodied in the human; the Alpha became the Omega, the first became the last; the end of the Lord's descent into nature and ultimate form was reached. Man had fallen to the lowest deep from the heights of his perfection; the Lord had now come to him to rescue him from the hands of his enemies, and to lead him back to Himself. The crisis is past. Henceforth throughout coming time poor, wandering, enslaved, dying humanity is to begin the ascent. His dead faculties, like the

DRY BONES IN THE PROPHET'S

vision, begin to stir; the walls of his prison begin to crumble; his chains loose their hold upon him; light begins to visit his sightless eyes. The whole body of humanity lay like one whose

LIFE IS TREMBLING IN THE BALANCE,

going, coming, fluttering, fading, reviving; the Lord came in the critical moment and put into the scale of life the preponderating influence. When they saw that help was provided, that man was saved, there was occasion for them to make all heaven sing with hallelujahs of glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men.

The speaker dwelt eloquently upon

THE LORD'S INCARNATION.

The Lord is love and wisdom itself. It is the nature of love to create; it is the source of all power; it is pure vital force itself; it is active, irrepressible and symbolized in those invisible and weightless agents which flow through and move to action all material things. Love does not act at random; it has a purpose, an end; it is an essential element of its nature to become embodied in something out of and distinct from itself, that it may give itself to others to be their own—to hold, to have, to enjoy. The Lord consequently has embodied himself in the creation. The material universe is His love and His thoughts embodied in form. * * * The Lord is within and behind the visible worlds. Light is

HIS SHINING ROBES,

the stars are the brilliant gems in its folds, the earths are the fine threads of which it is woven, the suns are the veil of His face, and their light the glory of His wisdom shining through. The Lord has always been in the creation. He cannot be separated from it.

The pastor beautifully traced the creation of plants, vegetables, &c., and showed that, commencing with the lowest, God ended the creation with man, made in His own image; He gave him a higher and more noble form, endowed him with

A RATIONAL MIND,

and gave him a higher form of freedom. Man is the temple in which He dwells, and man is the fullest expression of the Divine character. Diverting eloquently upon the preparations made by the Creator for man's wants, the minister declared that the Lord did all for man that He could do to prevent his fall, to hold him up. He met him face to face at every step of his departure from Him. He restrained him. He watched over him, He left nothing undone which infinite love could suggest and infinite wisdom could execute. He came according to all the methods of His working; it was the culmination of what He had been doing from the creation, and this is

THE KEY TO THIS GREAT MYSTERY

of God coming in the flesh. The Lord comes down to man's level; He stands side by side with him; He comes out from the interior and invisible dwelling place to man's senses; He walks with him, talks with him; He eats, drinks, labors and suffers with him; cures diseases, makes the lame to walk, and by so doing gains recognition and gets embodied in history and in human thought; He makes this fallen human nature which He has assumed

THE GRAND BATTLE FIELD OF THE UNIVERSE.

In this human nature He stood between man and his enemies; He stepped to the front of the battle, and, like David, with the smooth stones of His own divine truth, He smote the Goliath of man's spiritual enemies. Thus He restored man to spiritual freedom. But He was doing another work—He was glorifying the human nature which He assumed by means of Mary. The human nature, the Son, was becoming one with the Divine nature, the Father. Thus the great event announced in the words of the text, while it marks the turning period in human history, and is the final effect of the divine love and wisdom, is taken out of time and space, and becomes an eternal truth. As we contemplate the grand event we can accept it as true. There will never come a period in the history of any created soul who acknowledges the Lord, when he cannot take up the words of the angel and say to every other soul, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH.

Sermon by the Rev. Father Clancy.

The handsome church on Sixth avenue under the pastoral care of Father Farrell looked very bright yesterday. On the high altar was placed a statue of the Virgin, surrounded by pencil jets of gas. There were flowers and evergreens. Above the columns embowering the altar was the motto, in evergreens, "Glory be to God on high," and around the galleries, in the same material, was written the angels' warning to the shepherds, "For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." The congregation was of the

SOLID MIDDLE CLASS,

and was not wanting in bright, happy faces and comfortable, well-to-do exterior. The mass sung was one never before performed in this country. It is arranged for four voices, and is the composition of Signor Tiberio Natalucci. It abounds in beauties, and is, perhaps, much of the dramatic kind now much in vogue. The *Gloria* is powerful, and gives some fine opportunities to the bass and soprano. The *Et Incarnatus* is a very sweet soprano solo, sung with telling effect by Mme. Martinez. The *Sanctus*—particularly the second part, "Hosanna in Excelsis"—is very exquisite, but light and almost dance music. Mr. Martinez did full justice to the organ accompaniment. Father Farrell was high priest, and the sermon was preached by the Rev. Father Clancy. He first alluded to the collection about to be made, and premised that all the collections taken yesterday in the diocese were for the orphans. St. Joseph's congregation had done its duty nobly. There is something in the name of orphan which touches every father and mother, and at this happy time few could turn away from the orphan's need. It often requires peculiar discrimination to know on what object our charity should be bestowed. Individual charity often works more harm than good, for at times it serves but to foster vice and encourage idleness. In this instance the case is reversed. You take the orphans from the haunts of vice and crime and teach them the secret of labor, their duty to man and their duty to God. The text was from the epistle of the day, "Our Saviour came to teach us to set aside impiety, that we may live justly and thoughtfully and possess the long-expected hope."

PIETY

means charity. Originally it denoted only the affection which children should have for their parents; now it is the love which we express to the great God. But how are we to distinguish between the pious and the impious? What is the true meaning of final piety? We cannot manage our dislikes as we please. Should you ask a child if the meaning of the commandment which tells him to honor his father and his mother is that he should doff his hat when he meets them, even the child will laugh at you. No. When we say "honor" we mean love and duty and obedience.

MEN ARE OLDER CHILDREN,

but their duty is the same to God. The preacher then related the parable of the two sons—the one who promised to obey and fails to do so; the other who gruffly refuses, but finally repents and does his old father's will. Christ beautifully asks, "Which is the better one?" The love of the one is only a sentimental one, with the real force to carry his love to practice, the other letting it beat unheard against his first sentiment until a deeper thought calls forth his sense of duty and filial love. He was the latter one. So with

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

It is "not those who cry Lord! Lord! shall be saved, but those who do the will of my Father who is in Heaven."

This may not appear to have much in common with the great festival we celebrate, but it has. For our first duty is to love and honor Him who was born this day in the lowly manger at Bethlehem. We recall and re-read that lovely story of the shepherds and the angels. We strew around the palm as if we expected His coming again. We snatch a joy from the dying moments of the passing year. Dainty fingers deck His temple, and we give

IN HEALTHY CHARITY

a little from our store. But the best offering you can make is to show by your love and by your life how you appreciate all He has done for you. He came to redeem the world from sin, to mediate and explate for us. Let the sinful among us, then, turn to Him. How many will answer if asked to repent,

"I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT TO-DAY!"

From to-day they defer. Expostulate with them and they will admit all; will tell you they can't help it, business standing in society or some other excuse ever in the way. They will wait until their passions are cooled down, until they are old; but who can tell that the snows of age will cool the furnace of passion, and that at last they may not be called away in the midst of a revel without so much as a handwriting on the wall? But God is merciful. He waits long and patiently for his debts; there is

NO BANKRUPTCY BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

So this day, though one of mirth, becomes one of thought as we grow older. It is a milestone on the road of life. It brings back the shadow of absent friends, of the faces of the dead; it tells us we are growing old and passing away, and, with our feet planted in the shifting sands of time, we ask, "Whither are we drifting?"—to an eternity of happiness or one of misery. Let us humble ourselves, therefore, before that humble crib, and we shall find that as His small voice commands the Heavens and the Earth, so will our humble prayers be magnified in the sight of the Lord. Then shall we be filled with a pure and holy joy, and when you wish a merry, merry Christmas, His maxims, if followed, will secure not only that, but, through His grace, a happy New Year.

ST. THERESA'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Impressive Services—Eloquent Discourse of Rev. Father Flattery—Splendid Defence of the Pope's Temporal Power—A Shot at Freemasons.

The imposing Catholic edifice corner of Rutgers and Henry streets, known as St. Theresa's, of which Rev. James Boyce is pastor, was thronged at all the masses yesterday. At half-past ten o'clock the services were particularly impressive, a solemn high mass being offered up, Rev. Father Boyce acting as celebrant, Rev. Father Vitalian as deacon, Rev. Father Hogan as sub-deacon and Rev. Father McCauley as master of ceremonies. The high altar was beautifully decorated with a choice selection of natural flowers, while the pillars and galleries were tastefully wreathed in evergreens. St. Theresa's church has probably one of the most select congregations in the city, and the attendance at late services yesterday was highly respectable and fashionable. The music was under the charge of Mr. J. E. Gleason, the talented organist of the church, and was conducted with much artistic ability.

After the first Gospel, Rev. Father Flattery ascended the altar and delivered a most impressive and eloquent discourse on the topics suggestive of the great festival of Christmas. This gentleman has achieved a high reputation as an orator, as well as being a most accomplished scholar, and his discourse yesterday gave full evidence that this reputation has not been overestimated. After dilating at length upon the prominent topics suggestive of the great festival he glided into some

BEAUTIFULLY POINTED REMARKS

as to the Papacy and its temporalities. He stigmatized in scathing eloquence the vandal attack which had been made upon Rome by Victor Emmanuel, calling him the Herod of the nineteenth century, and prophesied that all dynasties which interfered with the rights of the Pontiff would inevitably end in destruction and decay. He also contrasted the condition of Rome anterior to its capture by Victor Emmanual and the aspect of that city at present. Now the tramp of the war horse, and the blasphemous tongue of a ribald and licentious soldiery had taken the place of the matin song and the beautiful chantings of the *Ave Maria*. Father Flattery logically proved the audacity of the attempt to rob the Pope of his temporal dominions, and remarked that the Italian King's action was open as much to condemnation as that of any individual who

JUMPED UPON THE ALTAR

from which the reverend gentleman was speaking and stole therefrom some of the ornaments which had been given to decorate the house of God by some member of the parish. In the discourse of Father Flattery he also condemned Freemasonry in bitter terms, and drew a vivid picture of the calamities which it entailed upon Catholics, particularly at the hour of death. No more despondent or despairing dying sinner was there to be found than the Catholic Mason, and no

MORE DIFFICULT TASK

had the priest to perform than to prepare that individual to meet his God after renouncing Masonry and dispel from his mind those harrowing sensations. The reverend gentleman concluded a most impressive sermon by exhorting his hearers to enter into the spirit of Bethlehem, and then they might heartily exclaim, "Glory to God on high and peace on earth to men of good will!"

The services were then proceeded with and did not conclude until after one o'clock. Solemn vespers took place at four o'clock in the afternoon.

NEW ENGLAND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

Christmas Sermon by Rev. Merrill Richardson—The Light and Beautiful Phases of the Mission of Christ—Glad Tidings of Great Joy to All.

That gladdest time of all the year—Christmas Day—found in no church in the city more fitting or tasteful commemoration than in the New England church, corner of Madison avenue and Forty-seventh street. Evergreen and floral decorations mingled their dark and rich emerald hues with the most delicate tints of the rarest flowers. About the pulpit and the organ

THE FLORAL DISPLAY

was a most beauteous and complete parterre, and the sweet incense of their delicious perfumes imparted a most grateful fragrance to the whole expansive interior of the sacred edifice. These flowers were most artistically wrought into bouquets, baskets and wreaths, and evinced in their extent and arrangement the most charming grace as well as profuseness. As usual, there was a

CROWDED CHURCH,

only yesterday morning it was, notwithstanding the intense cold and bleakly eddying winds, more so than usual. While the congregation were coming in Mr. McRae, the accomplished organist, played an exquisite voluntary on the organ—a lively and almost merry piece of music, which to play on any day but this merry anniversary would seem, especially to New England people, who, with all their modern liberality and progressiveness, have still some old Puritan notions of time-law sanctity clinging to them, at once highly inappropriate to the solemn sanctity of the Sabbath, if not positively sacrilegious. But it was deemed altogether appropriate to this occasion. Mere subdued, but still breathing a spirit akin to the same sentiment of heartfelt delight, was the anthem "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing," sung by the choir. It was most superbly rendered by Miss Mosher sustaining the soprano part, Miss Macomber the alto, Mr. Alain the tenor and Mr. Francher the bass. Following this were reading the Scriptures and singing by the congregation, who sing with a "down East" enthusiasm that is at once grandly worshipful and inspiring. Before commencing to deliver

THE SERMON

Rev. Merrill Richardson announced that in the evening he would exchange pulpits with Rev. Dr. J. P. Thompson, of the Broadway Tabernacle, and preach in the latter church, and that on next Sunday morning he would preach a "New Year sermon." His sermon yesterday was a "Christmas sermon," and a rarely eloquent discourse it was—replete with all his accustomed impassioned style and copious energy of argument and illustration. His text was Luke ii., 20—"Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." The birth of Christ, he began, was announced by angels. The news spread through the realms of bliss, and inspired a new song of praise. After an eloquent exordium, urging that upon this day, in commemoration of the birth of Christ, they should consider these glad tidings, his first point was that any authentic news from the other world is of momentous interest to men. Is there a life beyond this life? What is it and how is it related to our life here?

BEFORE CHRIST'S ADVENT

oracles were consulted and various means used to obtain some clear voice from behind the veil. The same, in substance, is done in our day. If, now, God should speak by a living voice, what tidings could be of such interest? Let the whole dome of night be lighted up, and its brightest star guide the shepherds to the spot! These tidings are authentic. They speak to the reason and the heart, and they are glad tidings. They tell us that God is good and His mercy is plentiful unto all. This Gospel teaches no limited atonement or partial grace. It reveals God as nature reveals Him, giving the Sun and the rain alike to all men. A special evidence which Christ gave that He came from God was that to the poor the Gospel was preached and the door opened to the captive. None were excluded. Archimedes said, "Give me a standpoint, and with my lever I can move the world." The people were Christ's standpoint, and He has moved the world. The common people can judge religious truth as well as the most intelligent. A Mary and a John knew it better than the Sanhedrim. The learned may be authority in physical science, but when it comes to the truth of life all can decide. The missionary could do little with our systems of divinity, but much with the

GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

It is glad news that the truth of God comes to man so that the poor, the heavy-laden, all the millions of the world, can find it and know it is of God. He enlarged upon this topic of his discourse, showing the effect upon the world's progress and history of Christ's mission on earth, and then with equal earnestness elucidated his second proposition, which was, that as a revelation of a future life the Gospel is glad news. It shows that God's kingdom is within us—that we must reap as we sow. Every one's character contains within itself its rewards or penalties. Man will carry into the next life the elements of happiness or misery. There will be no arbitrary inflictions. Not a tittle of God's moral law will pass away. The wicked will be filled with their own devices, and the righteous be satisfied in themselves. This principle of the next life can be understood. The gods of the pagans pardon and punish capriciously, but

GOD IS IMPARTIAL

and without variableness. His government will stand. Only the obedient can be blessed. No grace can save till the will submits to God's will. It is glad news, for it shows how deep God is interested in us. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to die for us. This is the grace we need; it is the love we crave. The heart responds to this revelation of God in the flesh. He dwelt at length, and with the cogency of irresistible argument, on this point, and then proceeded to consider the liberty which the Gospel brings to men and to all people. There was no human master in religion. "Judge ye not your own selves what is truth?" Christ allows no human authority over conscience. No priest or prelate or king has a right over conscience. Some nations are seeing this truth of God. The demand is, separate religion from the State and commit it to the people. Why, if Christ had come under authority of the Sanhedrim He could have spoken no glad tidings. To-day, then, we will join in the anthem of Heaven:—"Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, and God's good will to men." In return for these Gospel tidings he urged that they should devote life anew to the service of "Him who, though rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich." Rich in faith and hope; rich in this abounding grace of God. Ours the duty to make this Gospel glad tidings to all people.

The sermon, of which the above is only a very meagre abstract, was listened to with the most earnest attention. The exercises closed with prayer, singing the Doxology, and benediction. Scattered about in the pews were printed announcements of a course of scientific lectures on "Creation," by the pastor, on the Friday evenings of next month, at the church. A ripe and rare scholar, having few equals in this country, there can be no doubt of the highly interesting character of these lectures and of a large attendance.

CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH.

The Mission and Exact Position of Christ—Sermon by the Rev. Mr. Hepworth.

This now favorite resort of the fashionable churchgoers of Murray Hill was crowded yesterday as usual, by a congregation apparently as zealous and devout as one could wish for. Mr. Hepworth's text was taken from Matthew xvi., 13:—"Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" He began by saying that the question which Christ put to his disciples so long ago men have been putting to each other ever since. It was hard for those who looked the carpenter's son in the face and talked with him to believe that he was anything more than an ordinary man. And yet nothing is more evident than that Jesus claimed an authority far transcending that which obtains with common humanity, and the record tells that the Jews more than once took up stones to stone him because he gave the impression that he and God were one. That he did lay claim to be an ultimate authority and in some way connected with man's redemption no one can deny. His exact position in the scale of being has been

A QUESTION OF DISPUTE

ever since He was cradled in Bethlehem.

There are two classes of thinkers, both of them Christian, who look at what is called revelation in such different ways that it may be well for us to hesitate for a moment at this point. The first party is, compared with the great company of believers, very small. They look at the moral education of the world from the standpoint of naturalism. They are willing to admit that Jesus was greatest and most gifted among the great and gifted; but credit Him with no more power and authority than belong to any extraordinary genius. When He is said to have worked a miracle they tell us that either the story or the fact is the product of the people's imagination. Thus they are led to believe one part of the record which they can easily comprehend, and to deny the other part, which tells how Christ bade even the dead to come forth, and they obeyed his voice.

THE BIBLE HAS A VERY SLENDER AUTHORITY

for the naturalist. It takes its place among the books of philosophy, and that is all, for there can be no middle ground. The Bible is either a Divine revelation, supernaturally conducted, or a treatise of moral science, with no more authority than any other work on the same subject.

Next we come to the believer in a real revelation from God, and this belief is not merely a fact of faith; it is a logical deduction from history. God is a Being who is constantly interposing in human affairs, and who has religiously educated the world by raising up certain personages who have been our authoritative teachers. Christ came from heaven to deliver the will of the Father, and we believe that Christ knew of what he was speaking and was conscious of the weight of His words when He claimed for Himself attributes which belong only to God. That He did lay claim to a power equal to that which the Almighty exercises no one who accepts the record can easily doubt. This is

THE POINT OF DIVERGENCE

between the denomination to which I belong and myself. My sympathies on this matter, so dear to every Christian, are very much closer with other bodies than with the Unitarians. I have little patience with men who are unwilling to proclaim their faith in Christ as their Saviour. On this day especially do I feel that I am more in concert with the great body of believers who accept Christ as the Anointed, the Messiah and the Final Judge of the world. I believe not only in the Book as the great great source of spiritual inspiration, but in Jesus as my personal Saviour, the very embodiment of God himself.

Look for a moment at the slender beginning of that system of moral redemption which is yet to embrace the whole world. When the divine Babe was mangered in Bethlehem who could have dreamed of the influence His life was destined to have? Only they who saw the star as it rested over His cradle were aware that

A NEW EPOCH

in human affairs had begun. And when a man full grown He went down to the sea and bade the fishermen follow him, and then further on in His walks gave the same command to a few poor artisans, who could have dreamed that those seemingly humble instrumentalities were to be the means, in God's hands, of uprooting old systems, of tearing down moss-covered structures of ritualism and of establishing something that would reach to the uttermost ends of human life? And when He was arrested by the mob and crucified, did not His reign seem to be at an end? Who could have forecast the future? Had not the hand of God been in the matter in some especial manner the whole work would have ended then and there. And because the hand, yes, and the heart, of God, were in it, we hold this Christmas festival, trim our churches with evergreens and flowers, sing aloud our anthems of praise and bless the Father and the Son.

FIFTH AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH.

What Think Ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?—A Christmas Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Thomas Armitage.

Yesterday morning this elegant church was well filled by the usual fashionable congregation, but was by no means overcrowded. Though the Sun shone gayly in the heavens its rays imparted little warmth, and all were attired in their sober and comfortable winter garments as a protection from the pinching cold, frosty wind which blew in fitful gusts down the thoroughfares. The organ was pealing forth a cheerful strain as the people filed down the aisles. There was a look of

BENIGN HAPPINESS

on every face, and prior to the commencement of the services many a hearty Christmas greeting was exchanged by those in neighboring pews. After a selection from the recently introduced new version of the Psalms had been chanted by the congregation the choir sang a concerted piece very effectively, and the Rev. Dr. Armitage, pastor of the church, delivered a fervent prayer, in which he alluded to the many blessings which they had enjoyed since they were assembled on a similar day. Dr. Armitage then announced the text—Matthew xxii., 42, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" and preached a masterly sermon. The reverend gentleman seemed to be inspired by the occasion. His words were

AGLOW WITH ELOQUENCE,

and for nearly an hour he enchained the attention of all his hearers. Impressive as he was throughout, he was especially so in his concluding remarks, and every listener was visibly affected by the earnestness of his final appeal.

He commenced by comparing man—beautiful, perfect, complete, organized within and without, every limb, every feature, every member of his body perfect; formed in the dust, complete in the image of God; created by God's love; yet as unconscious of his own creation as the clay out of which he was made until God breathes into his nostrils

THE BREATH OF LIFE

and that power awakens the attributes of sensation—to a splendid piece of mechanism, mathematically exact, mechanically perfect, and beautiful in every respect, but motionless, devoid of sensation, and totally unconscious of its own existence, until some artificial power, is applied when it will aggregate to itself immense influences and move with tremendous force, plough through the ocean, plunge into a mountain or sweep across a country. One breath of God's spirit and the mind of man has been in

PERPETUAL MOTION

ever since—it has never stopped. This curious, mysterious, deathless power is restless, ethereal, divine. Its inception is the measure of a span; its consummation is the boundless infinite. With mind, its lowest formula is that the babe in the manger is a babe, that one is one, that A is A. Its highest formula is that the child born in the manger is the Mighty God and the Prince of Peace. "What think ye of the Christ? Whose Son is He?" It was a matter of thought, and the thought was to know who this Being is. The reverend gentleman went back to the time of Plato, the illustrious pupil of Socrates, four hundred years before Christ, and said the enlightened ages of those centuries stood upon the brink of revealed truth, just as a child without knowing it makes a plaything of a precious diamond, or a blind beggar treads upon

A BED OF ROSES.

They kept thinking on from day to day, from temple to temple, from altar to altar, and yet they knew no God by wisdom. Art, literature and science flourished; the world was at peace, civilization was as serene and clear as a sea of glass; the world's expectancy stood on tiptoe, man held his breath—then Jesus was born and since that day the intellect of the globe has been

LOOKING THROUGH THAT STABLE DOOR

and bowing over that manger-cradle to catch the warm breath of the newborn. The question in the text agitated Palestine from border to border. The universal reply was that Messiah was to be the son of David, but the rejoinder, "If he was David's son how did David call him Lord?" struck the Jews dumb. As there has never been a moment since the first Adam when the brain of his children ceased to think, so there has not been a throb of the pulse or the tick of a second in which the brain of man has not been on the stretch to measure and comprehend the last Adam, and it still rings out

THIS CHRISTMAS DAY,

on the passing and into the coming ages. His (the preacher's) theme was Christ, who to-day took up thought in every division, art in every school, architecture in every style, poetry in every measure, history in every page, song in every bar, intellect in every investigation, eloquence in every form and worship in every faction. Christ comes out of every crucible all the brighter and more distinct. Gravitation had changed its theories, but Christianity, as the centre of all moral gravitation, still draws all men into it. Astronomy has often corrected its theories, but the Sun of Righteousness still goes on. He (the preacher) had no patience with a man who sneers away the question. The greatest thinkers of all nations had been the humblest disciples. England's Milton, the world's greatest epic, sat in darkness singing a vision of his own eyes of the Christ in sublimest strains; France's Fenelon and

COLUMBIA'S WASHINGTON

had given their best love to Christ. Sceptics, essayists, reviewers, have a dagger for Christ, but each in turn has pierced his own flesh. Literary men the world over confess that the gravest question presented is put in the text, and that it is madness to disregard it. The age of sneering at the claims of Christ has passed away,

EXCEPT WITH FOOLS.

Even Professor Seely in his "Ecce Homo" is equivocal, not daringly defiant. The reverend gentleman then referred in detail to the leading propositions in the book named, refuting them, and also Dr. Bushnell's rationalistic views; after which he narrated the incidents attending Christ's birth, life and death, proving them to be multiform proofs of His Godhead. It was a matter of the very highest importance what a man thinks about Christ. By that thought he forms his action; that action forms his life, and that life

SEALS HIS DESTINY.

The reverend gentleman closed his eloquent discourse by a glowing appeal to all to take hold of the Saviour; to strip Him of the swaddling bands and robe Him in the warm affections of their hearts, and in conclusion trusted that by the sweet, precious, saving power of grace, and under its influence, every heart and every soul would be as merry as the merriness of Christmas and the complete love of God could make it.

After singing the doxology commencing "Glory be to God on high" the congregation dispersed, exchanging merry Christmas greetings as they passed out.

ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL.

Pontifical High Mass by Archbishop McCloskey—Sermon by Very Rev. Dr. Starrs—Papal Benediction.

At St. Patrick's Cathedral yesterday Archbishop McCloskey celebrated Pontifical high mass, assisted by Very Rev. Dr. Starrs, Vicar General; Rev. Father McGean as Deacon, Rev. Dr. McSweeney as Subdeacon, and Rev. Francis McNierney as Master of Ceremonies. The attendance was very numerous, every seat being occupied long before the commencement of the services. The choir of this church rendered in a creditable manner the Mass by Mandanici in G major. The principal parts were *Kyrie*, chorus and terzetto; *Dominus Deus*, soprano solo, sung with much expression by Madame Chome; *Cum Sancto Spiritu*, grand chorus of thirty-five voices. Madame Chome, soprano; Mrs. Werner, alto; Mr. Groschel, tenor; Mr. Sohst, basso; Mr. Henry Schmitz, conductor, and Mr. Gustavus Schmitz, organist, jointly displayed fine musical ability in their respective parts, and contributed not a little to elevate the

SOLEMN CHARACTER OF THE SERVICES.

Very Rev. Dr. Starrs, V. G., preached a sermon appropriate to the occasion, and selected his text from the second chapter of St. Luke—"And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled," &c. The reverend gentleman commenced by alluding to the august occasion, and dilated at some length upon

THE GRAND EXAMPLE

shown to mankind in the humble birth of the Saviour of the world. He referred to the devotion of this holy time and the contemplation of the infant Redeemer, who came among mankind poor and humble and clothed in the poorest garments. He then adverted to the wonderful mystery which marked the birth of the Saviour, and proceeded to show that it was to save man from sin and perdition that He so debased Himself. The example was unparalleled, and the lesson was worthy a long life study. In fine, the reverend gentleman besought the congregation to consider the

WONDERS OF GOD'S ALMIGHTY POWER,

wisdom and goodness which on earth He had wrought for the love of man, to have firm hope and confidence in His infinite power and mercy. At the conclusion of the reverend gentleman's sermon the services were proceeded with. Archbishop McCloskey gave the Papal benediction after mass. The ceremonies terminated shortly after one o'clock.

THE GERMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES.

The congregations that attend the German churches have much need to pray that the scourge of war be taken away from their brothers and countrymen. At the church of the great and good old St. Nicholas, the friend and patron of all the little ones, the usual masses of the day were celebrated. The church was handsomely and profusely decorated, and a little representation of the stable at Bethlehem stood at one side of the main altar. At the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer, in Third street, there was also a miniature representation of the Nativity, an elaborate display of flowers, natural and artificial, and numbers of vari-colored lights. The pious congregations flocked to these churches at all the masses, and no doubt many an earnest prayer went up from a devout and anguished heart that the God of Peace would send the olive branch to the harassed nations. There was benediction of the most holy sacrament after the last mass.

CHURCH OF ST. VINCENT FERRER.

Christmas Celebration at the Temple of the Dominicans—Nativity of the Saviour—Sermon by the Rev. Father Turner.

At early dawn the elegant new church at the corner of Sixty-sixth street and Lexington avenue was yesterday crowded to the doors. Perhaps a more impressive exhibition in honor of the great occasion could not anywhere have been seen in the metropolis. Illuminated by thousands of cheerful lights, which for a long time repelled the advances of smiling Aurora; appropriately decorated and filled to overflowing by a devout and earnest multitude, the holy edifice presented an appearance such as ever makes the holy festival

WELCOME TO THE FAITHFUL.

High mass was commenced at five o'clock in the morning, and the grand ceremony was marked by all the solemnity characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church. The fine choir, largely augmented by additional soloists, interpreted the beautiful selections with great ability, and when the joyful strains of the *Adeste Fideles* burst upon the ear just as the bright and lovely day appeared, a feeling of religious delight, happiness and gratitude pervaded the assemblage, then bowed in prayer. For a solemn spectacle on Christmas morning it could not have been surpassed. At each succeeding mass the attendance was equally large, but it was not until the high mass, at half-past ten o'clock, that the handsome and spacious temple looked to the very best advantage. The altar was very tastefully adorned and the cheerful rays of the Sun shone pleasantly through the grand Gothic windows, harmonizing the variegated hues of the numerous elegant toilets displayed. The celebrant was the Rev. Father McGovern, while the Rev. Father Lilly officiated as deacon, and the Rev. Father Dunne as sub deac