PALM SUNDAY.

The Triumphs of Christianity Expounded by Eminent Divines.

SERVICES AT THE GREEK CHAPEL.

Dr. Mulcahey on Pilate's Scepticism.

Beecher and the Love of the Brethren.

The possibility of a new issue of inconvertible paper I regard with amazement and anxiety, and, in my judgment, such an issue would be a detriment and a shame.—CHARLES SUMNER.

CALVARY CHURCH.—Rev. E. A. Washburn preached yesterday morning on the Fifth Commandment. The duty of filial affection and obedience was eloquently enforced and cogently illustrated.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH.—At St. Mark's church, corner of Tenth street and Second avenue, the pastor, Rev. J. H. Rylance, D. D., preached a sermon on Peter's apostasy, and drew a pointed moral therefrom for the consolation of sinners.

LYRIC HALL.—Mr. Frothingham, as usual, chose no text, but announced as the subject of his discourse, "The Agony of the Son of Man." He elucidated the subject entirely from his point of view, and was listened to with the most earnest attention.

FOURTH AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.—Chancellor Crosby preached on the theme that "The New Life Will Be Manifested by the Outward Life." His text was Colossians iii., 10—"And I have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."

THE COLLEGIATE REFORMED CHURCH.—In the old Collegiate Reformed church, corner of Fourth street and Lafayette place, the Rev. James Lamb preached. His sermon was founded on the words found in St. Mark, i. 2—"As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare the way."

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH.—Rev. R. S. Macarthur, the pastor of the Calvary Baptist church, Twenty-third street, between Fifth and Sixth avenues, preached yesterday morning upon the subject of Christian trials and triumphs. He chose for his text Matthew xxiv., 13—"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM.—Rev. Chauncey Giles preached yesterday morning at the church of the New Jerusalem, Thirty-fifth street, between Lexington and Park avenues. His subject was:—"Angels and spirits must have occupations: what the Bible reveals, and man's nature demands concerning them."

FIFTH AVENUE BRICK CHURCH.—Rev. James O. Murray, the pastor, occupied the pulpit. He announced as his theme "The Blessing of Being Associated with the People of God." His text was Numbers, x, 29. He impressed upon his hearers the necessity of individuals in Christianity identifying themselves with the Church.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH.—St. Peter's Roman Catholic church, in Barclay street, was filled to overflowing yesterday during morning service. Father C. R. Corley sung the mass and performed the benediction of the palms. The passion of our Lord was read from the pulpit in English by Father O'Farrell, from the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters of Matthew.

THE TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH.—At this church, corner of Second avenue and Tenth street, Mr. Henry D. Taylor, of the senior class of the Rochester Theological Seminary, preached his first sermon in New York. His discourse was founded on the text, "Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial; for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto — 1. Samuel, i., 16.

FOURTEENTH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.—The Rev. Robert Sloss, pastor of the Fourteenth street Presbyterian church, Second avenue, near Fourteenth street, preached yesterday morning on "The Holy Communion," making a long argument in support of the custom which was first instituted when Christ pronounced the words which constituted the text of the discourse, "Do this in remembrance of me."

ST. THOMAS' CHURCH.—In this church the service was read by the Rev. Dr. Morgan, rector. The rite of confirmation was administered by the Bishop of the diocese, the Rev. Dr. Potter. The Rev. R. E. Terry, of Brooklyn, preached an eloquent sermon from the text "He humbled himself," &c., taken from the gospel of the day. Fifty-four persons received the rite of confirmation.

OLD JOHN STREET METHODIST CHURCH.—The Rev. N. G. Cheeney, pastor of the old John street Methodist church, chose for his text yesterday the fifth chapter of the first book of Thessalonians, and a portion of the fifth verse, viz.—"Children of light." From the fact of children's disobedience to their parents he evolved the theory of the Christian's relations to his Heavenly Father and the infinite love of the Creator for His children.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH.—This church, situated in the neighborhood of much poverty, in City Hall place, was densely crowded yesterday morning. The whole of the service was conducted by Father M. Curran. The altar pictures were all draped with purple in commemoration of the day, the reverend father reading the passion of our Lord from the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters of Matthew instead of preaching a sermon.

ALL SOULS' CHURCH.—Dr. Bellows' pulpit was occupied yesterday by Rev. C. C. Carpenter. His text was eighteen verses of the first chapter of Matthew. He announced no particular subject, but went on to show there is a growth in spiritual matters as well as in material, and that Christ's character was so varied, yet always consistent, that he conquered all minds. The philosopher and the workman were alike well adapted to receive his instructions.

ST. LUKE'S METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.—The Rev. R. M. Hatfield, D. D., of Cincinnati, occupied the pulpit in this church in the morning. A numerous congregation attended. The words of the text were taken from James, i., 12—"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life," suggesting an eloquent discourse on the temptations of life, the trials of poverty and the blessed results of afflictions in general in the eventual bliss of perfect trust in God.

THE WELSH METHODIST CHURCH.—The Rev. H. Powell, pastor of this church, situated in Thirteenth street, between Second and Third avenues, preached a sermon in Welsh yesterday afternoon, the object of which was to prove that the Holy Ghost is the chief Mover in the Church; that to the Paraclete is to be ascribed all success. The text was from the sixth and seventh verses of the fourth chapter of Zechariah—"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

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BROADWAY TABERNACLE.—This magnificent building was in the morning yesterday filled by a large and reverent congregation. The pastor, Rev. William M. Taylor, D. D., preached, taking as his text Luke, iv., 4—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by the word of God." The sermon was an able exposition of the biblicate condition of man's life—trust in and obedience to God, in conjunction with the use of means afforded to us. Even as the body is supplied with bread so is the spirit supplied with the word of God; and "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we do all to the glory of God."

WEST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.—There was a moderate attendance at the morning service yesterday in this beautiful edifice. The pastor, Rev. Thomas S. Hastings, occupied the pulpit. The text taken was from Job, xv., 11—"Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?" The preacher, after some preliminary remarks on self-confidence and spiritual pride suggested by the context, proceeded to demonstrate the manifold and hopeful consolations which the all-wise goodness of God affords to mankind.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY (HARLEM).—The rector, Rev. Mr. McVickar, preached from Psalms, cx., 1. He spoke of the origin of Palm Sunday and how Christians should love to keep it. It should bring to mind the mediatorial works of Christ, the holy Passover, with blood to sprinkle the mercy seat, and to ask God's pardon for past iniquities. It ushers in the day when Christ sat at the table of the Last Supper, when He was at Gethsemane, of the tempest and woes of Calvary, of the rest in the tomb, of the days following like rays of light mid the dark storm.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY SAVIOUR.—Rev. A. B. Carter, the rector, preached on the subject of "Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem," taking for his text Luke, xix., 37, 38. The world, he said, would hardly recognize the descent from the Mount of Olives as a triumphal procession. It was almost a parody. But Christ, he proved, came not to show the majesty and glory of the kingdom above; came not as a mighty potentate, but illustrated in His life that true humility of heart is the noblest of all virtues. The service abounded with music most artistically rendered.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH.—At the First Baptist church, Park avenue and Thirty-ninth street, Rev. Dr. Thomas D. Anderson, the pastor of the church, delivered the morning sermon before a numerous congregation. He chose for his text the fifty-first and fifty-second verses of the eleventh chapter of St. John:—"And this spake he not of himself; but, being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

SOUTH REFORMED CHURCH.—Rev. E. P. Rogers, the pastor, occupied the pulpit, and preached on the "Duties of Christian Ministers," taking for his text Ezekiel, xxxii., 3—"Blow the trumpet and warn the people." The text and its context were a picture of war. The trumpet used in war sounded notes of warning, attack, assault, retreat or rejoicing in victory, as the case might be. It was necessary to strike the right note. From this illustration, as a basis, he indicated the duties of ministers of the Gospel, as God's trumpeters, to sound notes of alarm to sinners and call them to repentance.

CHURCH OF THE COVENANT.—Rev. Marvin R. Vincent, D. D., yesterday morning preached at the Church of the Covenant, corner of Thirty-fifth street and Park avenue, before a large and fashionable congregation, choosing for his text St. Luke xvi, 1 and 9—"And He said unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods."

"And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

TRINITY CHURCH.—The altar of Trinity church was draped with purple yesterday in commemoration of our Lord's passion. The congregation was unusually large. The pastor, the Rev. Morgan Dix, preached on the gospel of the day—Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the ignominious death which was awaiting Him. He said we are now permitted to commemorate again the blessed passion of our Lord. Human life is short and uncertain, said the preacher, and he prayed that his hearers would be always ready to meet their Lord, whether they lived or died, when He should come in the glory of His majesty to judge both the quick and the dead.

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CHURCH OF THE HEAVENLY REST.—Rev. Robert S. Howland preached on lukewarm Christianity, choosing as his text Revelations, iii, 15 and 16. Among men, he began, there are those who never show remarkable excellence, on the one hand, nor anything for scandalous tongues, on the other. This medium, lukewarm character is not often noticed where there has been either sickness or suffering. On the Judgment Day it would seem to be hard to tell whether they are wheat or tares. They are not saints, but they are very fair men. Why should not Christ judge them as leniently as the world does? Because Christ calls us out of the world to elevate us.

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH.—The services at St. Paul's Episcopal church, Clinton street, Brooklyn, yesterday morning, were more than ordinarily solemn, impressing the congregation very forcibly with the sanctity of the season that Palm Sunday commemorates. The prayers were read by Rev. Dr. Browne, terminating with the fine old hymn from Monk's collection, "Ride on! ride on in majesty!" after which Dr. Browne preached a very feeling sermon, taking for his text the forty-fourth verse of the twenty-third chapter of St. Luke's Gospel—"And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour." A very noticeable feature of the service at this church is the singing by the choristers of the processionals.

MADISON AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.—Rev. Dr. Adams preached yesterday morning to the usually large and fashionable congregation. His subject was Christ's interpretation of His mission, and his text Matthew, xvi., 13—"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" He said that Christ, though He associated with sinners, did not affiliate with them. There was no guile on His lips. Christ told His disciples plainly who He was; that He was the Messiah—the Christ of whom Moses had written and David sung, and whose coming the prophets had foretold. He showed the propriety of Christ making this revelation to His disciples, and the results of such revelation as manifested through all the centuries since.

UNITY CHAPEL (HARLEM).—"Rational Religion" was the subject of Rev. Mr. Clarke, who took for his text the words of Paul, "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good." He said that Paul was the first Christian rationalist. The Reformation was an outbreak of reason. Every distinctive development of Protestantism, from Luther to Theodore Parker, was in the line of rationalism. But Protestants have never been but half true to their own principles. They denied a live Pope, but put a printed one in its place. They made two mistakes in contending for an unnecessary infallibility, and the right of private judgment with the ability that education and moral insight give. Protestant freedom is that of a flock of sheep in a pasture, with wolves prowling without the walls.

CHRIST CHURCH.—At Christ Church, corner of Thirty-fifth street and Fifth avenue, the congregation assembled was unusually large. The Rev. H. M. Thompson, D. D., preached the morning sermon, choosing his text from the ninth chapter of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, fifth and sixth verses, "Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not as of coveteousness."—"But this I say, he which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."

SECOND REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.—This congregation, formerly worshipping on West Eleventh street, between Sixth and Seventh avenues, and more recently in Continental Hall, having purchased the Jewish synagogue on Thirty-ninth street, between Seventh and Eighth avenues, to be used hereafter as their church edifice, the dedication of this building yesterday was attended by a full meeting of members. The pastor, Rev. Andrew Stephenson, D. D., preached a sermon on the benefits of early dedication of life to God and the evils of spiritual neglect, his text being II. Chronicles, xxxiv., 1-7—the narration of the earlier acts of Josiah's reign.

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PILATE'S SCEPTICISM.

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Mulchahey on Pilate's Scepticism—To Believe in Truth Easier Than To Believe in Falsehood—The Beauties of the Christian's Faith and the Darkness of Scepticism.

The services at St. Paul's Episcopal church, corner of Broadway and Vesey street, yesterday, were of the peculiar solemnity demanded by the celebration of Palm Sunday. Yesterday was the occasion of the first great Christian festival since the renovation of St. Paul's. The new embellishments are of a very chaste and beautiful character, particularly in the chancel, where the mingling of blue and gold forms a very pretty effect. The blue of the background is relieved by pretty figures in gold, which are in the best taste. Here and there a monogram of the initials of the saint from whom the church is named may be seen, also neatly done in gold leaf. The pulpit has been renovated, and a sounding board, with the symbolic figure of the Holy Ghost in *relievo*, adds much to the effect of the voice. All the appointments on the altar, as well as in the church, have a new look and are set off by the cleanliness and freshness of the walls and balustrades of the gallery. Last evening the Rev. Mr. Mulchahey preached a sermon on the subject of Pilate's scepticism, taking his text from John xviii., 38—"Pilate saith unto him, 'What is truth.'" The preacher said:—We cannot say with positive certainty what were the feelings of Pilate in putting this question; but it is quite certain that he did not expect an answer. He put it either in jesting captiousness or else in gloomy despair—either as one who did not care whether or no there be any such thing as truth, or else as one who had settled himself in the conclusion that a knowledge of the truth cannot be attained with any satisfactory degree of certainty. The latter is the more probable. He had before him at the time a prisoner in respect of whom he was in grievous perplexity. An excited mob were clamorously demanding this prisoner's condemnation as a blasphemer against their God and a traitor to the State. And yet the whole demeanor and history of this prisoner were such as to make Pilate feel, not only that He was innocent of their charges, but also that there might be something superhuman in His nature. His perplexity respecting Him is shown by his conduct. This is very graphically pictured by Robertson, in a sermon on the text, "First, he hears what the people have to say; then he asks the opinion of the priests, then comes back to Jesus; from Him goes again to the priests and people, lends his ear, listens to the ferocity on the one hand and feels the beauty on the other, balancing between them. And then he becomes bewildered, as a man of the world is apt to do who has no groundwork of religious principles, and hears superficial discussions on religious matters and superficial charges and superficial slanders, till he knows not what to think." What could come out of such a procedure but that cheerlessness of soul to which certainty respecting anything and everything here on earth seems unattainable? What, in short, but that sad mental state which is properly designated by the word "scepticism?" Such, then, seems to have been his mood. And in such a mood, when he heard the very prisoner before him speak, with calm, majestic serenity, of truth as the very end and purpose of life; when he heard him declare, "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice"—oh, there was nothing in him attuned to such a tone, and the question, "What is truth?" broke from him in a sad, bitter, sarcastic sigh. "What is truth?" Who knows anything about it? Who has it? Who can be certain whether he has it or not? The question was not put to get an answer, for he went immediately out and did not wait for an answer. It was not put for the sake of ridicule, for he went on to say, "I find no fault in Him." There was sarcasm in it, but it was "that mournful, bitter sarcasm, which hides inward unrest in sneering words—that sad irony, whose very laugh rings of inward wretchedness." And now, in pursuing the subject, I have to say:—

First—That this state of scepticism in respect to religious truth is the saddest, the most unhappy and disheartening state into which one can get. It is better, far better, to be a misbeliever than an unbeliever; better to be mistaken in the object of one's faith than to have no faith. For the moment that faith is gone, the moment that one settles down into the conclusion that there is no such thing as truth, or no ascertainment of it, that moment his life is left without any guiding principle and without any high aim; and one of two wretched results will surely follow. Either he will become a mere trifler, or else a gloomy and malignant hater of everything that is accredited as truth. Of course, he will then regard all who profess to hold and believe in such truth as either hypocrites or fools; and this universal distrust of others can scarcely help reacting to foster dishonesty in himself. He is only playing the same game that others are playing for the same selfish ends; or else he assumes a tone of lofty superiority; deals out coarse and harsh invectives against bigotry and narrow-mindedness; plumes himself on his liberality of sentiment and his freedom from sectarian prejudice and sectarian cant; while, in truth, he is steeped to the very lips in the bitterest malignity against all who dissent in the least from his unbelief. What a wretched state of mind and heart! Who would willingly sink into it? Who would not be glad to know and anxious to hold fast to the principles of thought and life which will preserve him from it? Give me, then, your attention while I endeavor to indicate and illustrate some of these principles. First of all, then, let it be settled as a fundamental and unquestionable principle that in religion, as in every kind of science, there is such a thing as absolute truth. There either is, or else there is not one living and true God; and He either has or else He has not made that revelation of His nature and His will which is contained in the books of Scripture and proclaimed in the preaching and the sacramental ministrations of the Church. There can be no other alternative, no compromise which can mitigate in the least the opposition between these positions. One of them must be true—true as matter of absolute fact, altogether independent of any notions of ours—and the other must be as absolutely false. It is not a question between different sets or phrases of opinions, either of which may be held or rejected in the way of mere speculation. It is not a balance of suppositious or theoretical notions, but it is a simple unmitigated alternative between absolute truth and sheer downright falsehood.

Second—It must be held, therefore, in the second place, as a settled principle that belief of the truth and nothing but the truth in this matter is of vital importance. Pilate's question is often put nowadays—whether put by him or not—in such a spirit as a sneer at the folly of insisting on any decided conviction in religious doctrine or fact. "What is truth?" it is asked. "Who need care for that? What difference does it make whether we believe in one God or in three gods, or in twenty, if we only live godly? What matters it whether we hold all the articles of the Christian faith as contained in the Apostles' creed or deem this faith no better than antiquated superstition, provided only that our conduct accords with good principles? Of of what importance can any dogmatic shades or degrees of belief be provided only that we are sincere in what we do hold?"

For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

This sounds very plausible and finds an easy currency with the careless and superficial. But one must be very careless and superficial not to see that its plausibility is not that of truth, but of wretched fallacy. For it ought to be understood by every one who thinks at all, or assumes to know anything, about religion, that in both its function and its subject matter faith is something quite distinct from, and altogether superior to, mere opinion. There are, unquestionably, in religion, as in every other department of life and thought, a thousand subjects which are properly matters of opinion; but here, as elsewhere, they are only such matters as are uncertain and indeterminable. In assigning them to the province of opinion we determine them to be such. We do not profess to have certain knowledge respecting them, but only a probable judgment. We are of the opinion, that is, we think, on the whole, from the degree of evidence afforded us, that they are so and so; but concede, or ought to concede, to others who may see them from a different standpoint or under different degrees of evidence, the right to an entirely different opinion. But faith, and especially religious faith, is quite distinct from this. Faith is not what one thinks or conjectures, but what one believes, and the subject matter of belief is not that which is deemed to be presumable but that which is recognized as accredited fact. Religious faith is the assent of the mind and heart to the truth which God has revealed. This truth is external to us. It remains the same whether we believe it or not. It does not depend upon and is not at all affected by our thoughts or sentiments. But surely, if it be revealed, and if we be living in the light of that revelation, we must be responsible for its reception, and it must make a very great difference in our character and on our destiny whether we receive and conform to it or refuse to do so. There are certain truths in the revelation of nature. They are the truths of nature, and, whether men have faith in them or not, does not alter nature, but it does seriously affect men. It is a truth, for example, that, while many of the earth's products are nutritious others are poisonous. Now, one may have but a very imperfect knowledge of all that is involved in this general truth, and his practical use of it may be proportionably restricted. But faith in the truth will keep him from presuming beyond his knowledge, and so insure his safety. But if, on the other hand, one determines for himself to ignore this truth and insists on making his own individual taste and opinion the sole rule for deciding on what he shall eat or drink, his faith is positively wrong—that is, it is faith in his own self-sufficiency and infallibility, instead of in the real fact, and it would not be very surprising if he should go on to choose the sweetness of poison, in which case he would have nobody but himself to blame in its consequences—suffering and death. Precisely so in the revelation of grace. The subjects of this revelation are God's truths—truths that do not depend upon and are not at all affected by the notions or fancies of men. For instance, that there is one living and true God; that He is our Almighty Creator and Father; that He cares for us, loves us, yet holds us accountable by the laws of righteousness; that when we had fallen under the power of sin He sent His only begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and in it to live and die for us; that in the person of Christ Jesus was God the Son incarnate and dwelling in our flesh; that His life was for us a true fulfilling of the law of righteousness, His death a true propitiation and satisfaction for our transgressions; that He rose from the dead and ascended again to the right hand of the Father in Heaven, where He now liveth to intercede for us; that before His ascension He ordained and constituted sacramental ordinances—one for initiation into His religious economy and another for continued fellowship and communion in its spiritual life; that so was established for universal and perpetual extension His Church on earth, "which is His body," the habitation of His regenerating and sanctifying Spirit, in which He is revealed and imparted to every faithful soul as the way, the truth and the life, and that the conditions of everlasting salvation are thus proffered to every one of us. These, and such as these, are the truths revealed. They are truths whether we receive them or no. If we had never received a revelation of them we should not be held responsible for belief in them; but surely no one who is not blinded by miserable self-deceit can fail to see that if a revelation of them have been vouchsafed from heaven, and if we have been placed by God's providence within the light of that revelation, it does, it must, make a momentous and vital difference to us whether we rightly believe them or no. If, in the light of such a revelation, you throw yourself back on your individual fancies and opinions, and determine to exercise your independence by trusting in and following them, you do not, and cannot, change the truth in the least by your conclusions, but you put yourself, in relation to the dispensation of Divine grace, in a position precisely analogous to that of the case previously supposed in relation to nature. In assuming that position, it is clear, in the first place, that the mental temper is wrong. It is an attitude of absurd self-conceit—an assumption that you have sufficient wisdom and strength in yourself to stand apart from all the common relations of the economy in which the Divine providence has cast your lot; that you can subsist without dependence on any of its resources, and find your way clearly without accepting its light. The vanity of such an assumption is not more remarkable than its folly, and these are both surpassed, if possible, under the claims of the Christian revelation, by its ingratitude. For here the withholding of faith involves not only rejection of truth, but also repudiation of a Person, and that Person, Him who claims to be the only begotten Son of God incarnate for our salvation. His claim to our faith involves also claims to our deepest gratitude and our most dutiful and loving devotion; claims to the homage of all that we are and have, to the entire submission of ourselves and all that is ours to His service, under the direction and guidance of His holy spirit. And it is not possible for you to withhold faith from Him without its involving, as a consequence, the refusal of your gratitude and your allegiance; it is not possible to be deficient in your faith without an exactly proportionate detraction from all your religious principles and affections. To these considerations it is to be added now that there is no doctrine which comes to us as a doctrine of revelation—I mean, simply, on that assumption, no article of the Christian faith which is not, in its very nature, if true at all, of the utmost practical consequence. Take the great fundamental truth of all revealed religion—that there is one Almighty and Everlasting God, in whom and by whom and to whom are all things. This, if it be a truth—a truth the knowledge of which involves obligations far beyond that of a mere theoretical opinion—it demands the devotion of all our faculties to Him, and our most implicit trust in Him. And, on the other hand, we cannot disbelieve it without being left, in our unbelief, without God in the world; and our very existence becomes to us, in consequence, a mere accident of time—without principle, without devotion, without hope. So with the revealed character of God, the doctrine of the Bible in relation to His attributes of omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, goodness, holiness, justice and mercy. If your belief strip Him of any of these attributes, or substitute others of a character inconsistent with them, it is plain that both your service in relation directly to Him, and also your whole character in all its relations, must, in so far as you are true to your belief, be especially affected. So with any of the doctrines which are distinctively Christian; the alternative is the same between truth and falsehood, and the practical consequences are just as diverse. If the doctrine of the divinity of Christ be true, it involves the duty of honoring Him even as we honor the Father. But if that doctrine be not true, then the rendering of such honor unto Him is nothing else than downright idolatry. If the doctrine of the atonement by His blood be true, it demands repentance of sin and implicit faith in Him for salvation; if it be not true, such repentance is needless and such faith vain. If the doctrine of the resurrection and future judgment be true, it is our wisdom and our duty to live as they that must give account for an inheritance of eternal life; if it be not true, we may as well adopt as our motto—"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

When such alternatives are at issue it must not be pretended or thought that it is unimportant—that it is less than vitally important—to know and believe the truth. This, then, we repeat, should be held ever as a settled, fundamental principle that a true belief—belief, that is, of the truth—in religion, is not a matter of indifference, but of the utmost importance.

Third—And now there is a third fundamental principle, which is this: That in religion, as in all science, the truth is to be authenticated by certain legitimate rules, and has its vitality in organic institutions. There is a large and quite pretentious class of religious philosophers in these days who are continually talking about "searching for the truth," as if the truth were something which is adrift somewhere in the wide universe, and which every individual is to spend his life in seeking—each one in his own way and on his own account. But, surely, there are some things tried and proved in religion as in everything else. Truth has laws and principles which are settled, and which are not to be ignored and continually reargued, but, on the contrary, to be accepted and relied upon with undoubting assurance. Suppose one should adopt a similar philosophy in the matters of the present life. Suppose we should take the ground that every man must find and test for himself all truth. Suppose we should compel every one to find out for himself whether fire will burn, whether water will drown, whether there be any such thing as poison and what are its effects; whether it really makes any difference what we eat or drink, and in all other matters demand from every man—nay, from every boy and girl—the exercise of the same right of private judgment—it is quite probable that it would not be very long before our philosophy would, by its own practical conclusions, effectually demonstrate its absurdity. No, brethren, truth is not thus adrift, without local habitation or name. It is not thus subject ever to individual empiricism. It is established in laws and institutions. It has the attestation of testimony and the prescription of common consent, and woe to him who presumes, without very good reason, to contradict any fact or doctrine which is substantiated by the weight of concurrent authority! To do it under any circumstances is to assume a tremendous responsibility. True, it is possible, that a doubt of some principle, which is apparently thus established, may cross—nor only that, but lodge itself in one's mind, and evidence against it, seemingly new and credible, may come to him or flash upon him, and then his individual responsibility requires that he should—not plunge at once into general scepticism, nor suffer his mind to betake itself indefinitely and superficially to the entertainment of all sorts of questions and doubtful disputations, but give himself, with all his capabilities, under a full sense of all the responsibilities that God has laid upon him, with a faithful and conscientious use of all sources of light and all means and tests of knowledge, to the investigation of just that point—to search out the ground of his doubt and determine the worth of his evidence; and it is possible that, in the process, the old truth may become to him a demonstrated falsehood. But he must be an exceedingly vain and presumptuous person who does not shrink from such a position, or who can enter into it without most profound deference to the overwhelming presumption of prescript authority which stands against him. The true spirit, then, the spirit which for the attainment of both truth and happiness we should all cherish, is not that of Pilate, which puts one continually in a questioning and doubting attitude, but it is that of the modest and deferential disciple, quick to receive, apt to believe and predisposed to implicit faith in all legitimately established authorities. It is a gloomy and a wretched thing to lose this faith or to have it unsettled. There is a conceit which young men are apt, especially, to entertain, and which there are peculiar influences at work in our time to foster, that scepticism is a proof of strong mindedness, something that they may be proud of. But it is a miserable delusion—a delusion which a larger knowledge and a deeper experience of life reveals to be miserable in its character and its effects. It is no proof of intellectual strength; it is but surface work to doubt. To go on from doubt to disbelief is to go somewhat deeper; but disbelief may require no real thought, no knowledge, no honest judgment—nothing but an untrue conscience, a depraved taste and a perverse will. These are quite sufficient to lead any one who submits himself to their guidance into the lowest depths of religious unbelief. But to have a well grounded faith; to have proved the worthlessness and futility of sceptical speculations; to have come to a clear apprehension of the facts and the responsibilities pertaining to all our relations, both temporal and eternal; to recognize and duly appreciate the evidences of history, of prophecy, of miracle, of natural analogies, of divinely established and providentially perpetuated institutions; to have come through doubt, through difficulty, through the drawbacks of carnal conceit and self-pleasing, by real earnest thought and study and prayerful striving, unto the knowledge of God in Christ; to be able to say honestly, with a noble hero of old, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him"—this requires, if not intellectual strength, at least intellectual and spiritual integrity. And it is itself a ground and source of strength. "To believe," Robertson well says—and on this point I quote the more gladly from him, as one never suspected of any tendency toward a too credulous faith—"To believe is to be strong. Doubt cramps energy. Belief is power. Only so far as a man believes strongly, mightily, can he act cheerfully or do anything that is worth doing. * * * The only manly thing, the only strong thing, is faith. It is not so far as a man doubts, but so far as he believes, that he can achieve or perfect anything. 'All things are possible to him that believeth.'" Never count him a benefactor, then, but consider him, rather, as your worst enemy, who trifles with or in any way endeavors to unsettle your faith. And never, on your part, be false to it.

Never allow yourself to be an imitator of Pilate in asking, sceptically, "What is truth?" But let your spirit ever be attuned to find its truest expression in the psalm of faith:—

Lord, forever at Thy side,
Let my place and portion be;
Strip me of the robe of pride,
Clothe me with humility.
Meekly may my soul receive
All Thy spirit hath revealed;
Thou hast spoken—I believe,
Though the oracle be sealed.
Humble as a little child
Weaned from the mother's breast,
By no subtlety beguiled,
On Thy faithful Word I rest.

The possibility of a new issue of inconvertible paper I regard with amazement and anxiety, and, in my judgment, such an issue would be a detriment and a shame.—CHARLES SUMNER.

PLYMOUTH CHURCH.

Mr. Beecher on Love—The Power Which Makes Man Like God—How the Plymouth Congregation Took the Verdict of the Council.

On entering Plymouth church yesterday morning, twenty minutes before the commencement of services, one strange to the place would probably have been surprised by the buzz of half-suppressed, eager voices. On all sides excited brethren and sisters were communicating to neighbors the results of the late session of the Congregational Council, which had closed its labors in the small hours of the morning. Some brought their HERALDS with them and were reading its report and the editorial comments, and all who occupied the already mostly filled pews were discussing in an excited way the acts and counsels of the ecclesiastical body which they seemed to consider as convened to squelch the Plymouth pastor and throw discredit on the discipline and morale of their church. Little of the conventional awe of a house of worship appeared to check the Plymouth flock in their free criticism in the meeting house upon what they consider as unwarranted meddling in their affairs. They having seen fit to quietly drop from the church rolls a person who had voluntarily severed his church connection four years before, without bringing him before the Congregational bar and thrusting him from the pale with the anathemas of excommunication, they hold that under their form of organization they alone are competent to decide upon such action, and ask neither consent, indorsement or counsel of sister churches in the matter, especially as it is understood that the churches which now seek to impugn their action have in many cases done precisely the same thing, without doubt or question of its propriety or their right. So far as the Council exonerated Plymouth church from censure in the matter at issue the verdict was accepted as well enough by its critics in Plymouth church assembled; but where the conclave assumed to advise the garrison of the rock as to their future course, it was plain to see and easy enough to hear from all portions of the throng in the body of the sanctuary and its wide galleries a decided expression of dissent and disapproval.

Mr. Beecher came in, as usual, at the rear entrance, threw his soft hat upon the floor, and, glancing upon the floral wealth arranged upon either hand, threw his cloak coat into the pastoral chair and sat upon it, busying himself finding his hymns and turning down the leaves in the New Testament where he intended to read his text and the morning lesson. As the clock opposite the choir pointed to half-past ten, John Zundle, the gray-haired old Swiss, who for so many years has presided at the noble organ, commenced a prelude which seemed a musical rendering of the spirit of Plymouth church, and its

ANSWER TO THE ECCLESIASTIC CHALLENGE.

He played what resembled a bugle call to action, changing sweetly and grandly into a triumphal march and a pean of victory; the whole framed on an air of touchingly melodious love and harmony. Then followed the grand anthem by the full choir—"Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Miss Lazar, singing the solos—in which Christians are bidden to "love one another." No distinct mention was made of the Council in Mr. Beecher's prayers; but when he read the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, which he termed the "charter of the Christian Church," substituting the word "love" for "charity" through the chapter, it was evident enough what was in his mind. He named as his text I. Corinthians, i., 18-25, inclusive, in which Paul states that the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness; but unto the saved, the wisdom of God. He continues to state that God's plan of salvation was based not upon Greek philosophy or Hebrew scholarship nor the learning of the dialecticians who disputed and taught in the streets of the various cities, but upon the wisdom and power of God. Paul, said Mr. Beecher, seems, in the opening of this letter to the Corinthians, to hurl a defiance against all intellectual excellence. He enumerates the several classes of learned men of the time, and says explicitly that salvation comes not through their wisdom—it comes by the power of divine love. God makes the worldly wise seem foolish by the presentation of salvation by Christ. He does not in this undervalue the uses of science. He don't touch that question. He simply announces that the spirit of the New Testament is the superior value of the power of the heart. It gives the disposition, the emotions, the primacy over the intellect and knowledge. Men are transformed into the Divine image by heart life. We are not called to choose between the heart and the intellect, but to use the one before the other, to use the intellect in increasing our power of loving. We are to construe the teachings of history as enforcing the duty of love to God and man. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. Without love all faith, zeal, fidelity to party or doctrines is only relative. The great tragedy of truth is based on rock. Love, which would sacrifice self for another's good, is the foundation of the divine system taught by Paul. "When I was a child," he says, "I thought as a child," but the love of Christ has taught me a higher wisdom. Could Newton, after fathoming the motions of the planets and weighing worlds, have been induced to go back into the nursery and be amused with a string and a top?

LOVE ABIDETH.

Faith, hope, love—these will endure till eternity. The heart remains. The intellect and its knowledge pass away and change. We are to develop in this life Christ's disposition. He came not to the great, the wise; He came to call men from the flesh life to the life of the spirit which exalteth itself in love; to work out with justice liberty. Love is the great architect of the world's reconstruction, not wisdom. Love evolves all with justice, liberty. This great truth of divine love in the human soul is to lift us up to sympathy with God. It must be developed with fervor. "Love God with all thy strength and thy neighbor as thyself." This is to be the rule. Every household on earth says amen to this command. What so sacred as father, mother? The household was the primitive Church and is the model of the Church. All its ministrations are based on the foundation of love. To call all the world to love is different from calling it to orthodoxy. To plough the ground simply to raise a crop of weeds would be poor farming. The proper evidence of Christian experience is love. The new birth requires love. One may exhibit faith, zeal, orthodoxy; but without love there is but a miscarriage. It is not enough to creep; one must learn to walk, to fly, to love his neighbor as himself. Only love has a right to say

I AM SOVEREIGN.

It has the right to be the vicegerent of God. This spirit must come with power. It has had sporadic manifestations; it must become prevalent as the atmosphere of our Christian life. It must be constant and spontaneous. Pride reaches for the sceptre, saying to love get thee behind me; and vanity and reverence for authority says to love, "put off thy shoes, this is holy ground." Beauty, with quick appreciation of harmless joys, claims to be supreme in the soul; yet God exalts love to rule the earth. No joy alone is like the joy of a thousand hearts; no voice like the voice of a multitude. So churches are most powerful when they have the consciousness of love pervading all, the voice of love rising from each in concert. Is this the atmosphere of churches now? When such a spirit reigns all quarrels are forgotten, old disputes and differences of doctrines disappear like the snow before the April sun, which not all March winds could blow away. All churches have this evidence of their faith if they love each other. Orthodoxy is nothing if there is not love in the heart. When church joins to church in the spirit of love the element of humanity will be led into a life of higher moral qualities. This is part of the plan of God's providence.

THE INTELLECTUAL ELEMENT

in society will help this. It tends to build up the external barriers against vice and wrong. Knowledge alone will not change men from flesh men into spirit men. We recognize its value, but the intellect should be the servant, not the master. The heart should rule. I hold the reverse of Buckle's proposition. Intellect may be the headlight; but the prop