

VI.

THE CHURCHES OF NEW YORK.

REFORMED DUTCH—PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL—LUTHERAN—PRESBYTERIAN—BAPTIST—METHODIST—JEWS—ROMAN CATHOLIC—OTHER DENOMINATIONS AND MISSIONARY SOCIETIES.



THE early religious history of Manhattan presents many interesting reminiscences, which for want of space we cannot minutely present. Intolerance and persecution we are, however, sorry to say, existed, in those good old days of "simplicity and sunshine."

The troublesome doctrine of uniformity long retarded the genuine religious development of the people. The first Quaker preacher landed in 1656, but finding it unsafe for one of his faith and habits, departed unceremoniously. In 1707 a Presbyterian clergyman was arrested and compelled to pay the cost of an expensive suit, for preaching in a private house, and baptizing a child. In 1709, a Baptist minister was imprisoned three months for presuming to preach in the city without permission from the authorities. The Jews were long denied the privilege of worship, and a law was passed, though never enforced, for hanging every Catholic priest who should voluntarily enter the city. These prejudices, however, early passed away.

REFORMED DUTCH.

The island being at first settled by the Hollanders, it was but natural that the Dutch church should long have the pre-

cedency. A church organization was effected in 1626, and there are regular records since 1639. In 1642, a stone church



THE OLD DUTCH CHURCH, FULTON STREET, CORNER WILLIAM.

(In which originated and are now held the Fulton-street noon prayer-meetings.)

edifice was erected in the southeast corner of the fort at Bowling Green. The building was 70 by 52 feet, 16 feet high, and cost 2,500 guilders. It stood 99 years, and was then destroyed by fire. In 1693, the Garden street Dutch

church was erected, and in 1729 the Middle Dutch church, used since 1844 as the New York Post Office. It was in this church that the zealous Dutch submitted after much excitement and discussion to the introduction of preaching in the English language, to save their young people, who were flocking to the English churches. The first sermon in English was preached by the Rev. Dr. Laidlie, on the afternoon of the last Sabbath in March, 1764, the innovation being such a novelty that the building and its windows were packed beyond all description. This occurred just one hundred years after the introduction of the English government and language. The North Dutch church was the next erected, on the corner of what is now William and Fulton streets. The land now valued at \$300,000 was donated by John Harpending; the corner-stone was laid July 2d, 1767, and the house dedicated May 25th, 1769. The structure is of stone, 100 feet long by 70 wide, with a lofty steeple, and cost nearly twelve thousand pounds. It was in this venerable edifice that the far-famed Fulton-street daily prayer-meeting, characterized by unusual catholicity, fervent spontaneity, and the devout and pentecostal mingling of strangers, originated in September, 1857. Here it still continues. The Reformed Dutch have now 25 churches and chapels on the island, many of which are large and well attended, but their paucity indicates that this excellent denomination, first on the soil, has not been very aggressive.

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL.

On the surrender of Manhattan to the English in 1664, the haughty conquerors not only took possession of the fort, but of the church also, and forthwith introduced the Episcopal service, changing the name of the building to King's Chapel.

The service of the church of England was conducted here until the dedication of the first Trinity in February, 1697. This building, which stood on the site of the present Trinity, was a small, square edifice, and after being twice enlarged, was destroyed by the great conflagration of 1776. It was rebuilt in 1788, pulled down in 1840, and the present magnificent structure completed and opened for worship, May 21st, 1846. It is solid New Jersey brown-stone from foundation to spire, except the roof, which is wood. The edifice, which is in the Gothic order, is 192 feet long and 80 feet wide, the side walls rising fifty feet. The spire stretches upward to the lofty altitude of 284 feet, up the winding stairs of which hundreds ascend daily 308 steps (250 feet) to the tower, where they obtain a magnificent view of the city, and its immediate surroundings. The chimes of Trinity are surpassed by few bells in the world. Trinity was endowed by Queen Anne, and came into possession of a large farm owned by a Dutch woman named Anneke Jans, which now covers a large portion of the city. Trinity is the mother of Episcopal churches in America. It is the richest religious corporation on the continent, its property, mostly in city real estate, being valued at forty or fifty millions. Many of the streets of New York bear the names of her rectors and vestrymen.

The plan of a collegiate charge was early adopted by the Dutch and Episcopal churches of New York, and still continues to a limited extent. St. Paul's, situated on Broadway, between Fulton and Vesey streets, a fine structure of reddish gray-stone, was opened for dedication October 30th, 1766. St. Johns, on Varick street, was erected in 1807, at a cost of over two hundred thousand dollars, and St. George's was dedicated July 1st, 1752. All these were under the Trinity parish, though the last-named has since become a separate corporation.

The Episcopalians of New York are a vigorous and benevolent body, forming really the strength of the denomination in the country, supporting numerous benevolent institutions,

and paying annually large sums to maintain feeble parishes, scattered over the interior of the State. Their churches and chapels (94 in all) outnumber those of any other denomination on the island. They have been exceedingly happy in selecting names for their churches; besides the churches of the Holy Apostles, Holy Innocents, Holy Communion, Holy Martyrs, and Holy Trinity, we read of the church of St. Alban's, St. Ambrose, St. Andrew's, St. Ann's, St. Clement, St. John's, St. Luke's, St. Mark's, St. Paul's, St. Peters, St. Philip's, St. Stephen's, St. Mary's, etc., etc., until one feels that New York is a sainted community, notwithstanding the number of sinners reported to still lurk around its corners.

LUTHERAN.

The Lutherans, akin to the Reformed Dutch, were the third to establish a separate service. Indeed it appears to have been established before the English conquest, though no church edifice was erected until 1702, when a small stone building was reared on the corner of Rector street and Broadway, which was also destroyed by the fire of September, 1776.

In 1767, they erected a substantial stone edifice on the corner of Frankfort and William streets, known as the "Swamp church," and others in different parts of the city, have been since added as the wants of the denomination have required. There are now about fifteen Lutheran churches on the island, several of which have large and wealthy congregations.



TRINITY CHURCH—Broadway opposite, Wall Street; 80 x 192 feet; 284 feet high.

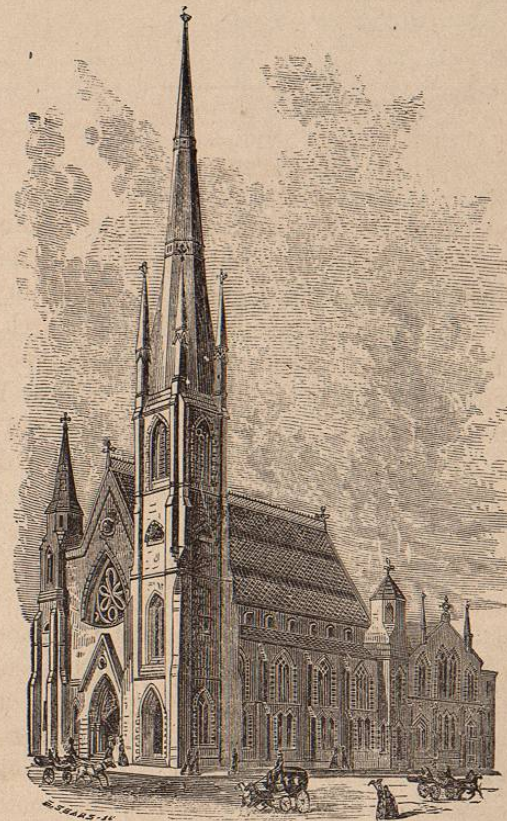
PRESBYTERIAN.

The Presbyterians, whose activity and strength are at this time second to no Protestant body in New York, were long and bitterly opposed in establishing their system of worship. They met in private houses for a considerable period, and in 1716 organized their first society, connecting it with the Presbytery of Philadelphia. Having gained recognition from the authorities, they were allowed to worship in the City Hall until 1719, when they opened their first edifice in Wall street near Broadway. This first building was enlarged in 1748, rebuilt on an enlarged scale in 1810, destroyed by fire in 1834, and again rebuilt and occupied until 1844, when it was sold and taken down; the congregation erecting what has since been known as the First Presbyterian church, corner of Broadway and Eleventh street. Their second edifice, the "Brick church," on the corner of Beekman and Nassau streets, was dedicated January 1, 1768, and stood at that time in the open field. The next was the Rutgers-street church, opened for worship May 13, 1798, which was followed by the Duane, established in 1808, and the church of University place in 1845. Many of their churches are now located in the richest parts of the city, with large Sunday schools and intelligent congregations. It is doubtful whether two more wealthy or liberal congregations can be found on this continent than that of the First Presbyterian church, Dr. Paxton, pastor, which last year contributed to benevolent enterprises over one hundred and sixty thousand dollars, and the Fifth avenue Presbyterian church, Dr. John Hall, pastor, which contributed over one hundred and eighteen thousand dollars. Of these sums nearly a quarter of a million went to outside charities. A collection of \$20,000 is no unusual thing for a Sabbath morning. Many of these churches establish and support missions in less favored localities. The churches and mission chapels of the Presbyterians

proper number seventy, those of the United Presbyterians eight, of the Reformed Presbyterians seven, and of the Congregationalists nine. Several magnificent institutions, which are elsewhere described in this work, have recently been projected by this denomination.

BAPTIST.

The first Baptists on Manhattan were of the Arminian faith. They began their toil amid violent persecution, and immersed some of their converts at midnight, to avoid difficulty. Their first house of worship, the Arminian Baptist church, stood on Golden Hill, afterwards Gold street, and was erected about 1725. The history of the Baptist church in New York presents some remarkable congregational feuds, and whether these have retarded or developed the growth of the denomination we shall not attempt to decide. As neither faction have understood the principle of surrender, nearly every serious dissension has either resulted in the extinction of a church, or in the founding of one or two new ones. In 1770 a difficulty arose in the First church, during the pastorate of Rev. John Gano, respecting psalmody. Most of the congregation preferred to abolish the old custom of parcelling out the lines in singing, whereupon a number of members withdrew and established the Second Baptist church. The Second church gained accessions after the Revolution, when another strife arose, about equally dividing the membership, each party claiming to be the Second Baptist church, and virtually communicating each other. Through the mediation of friends in 1791, the disputed title was dropped; one section became known as the Bethel church, and the other the Baptist church in Fayette street. Thus one church literally, though unhappily, developed into three in twenty-one years. In 1802



THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH—Cor. 39th Street and Park Avenue.
Erected 1871; size 66 x 100 feet; cost, including lots, \$250,000; seating capacity, 1,000.