

LXX.

REV. DR. SAMUEL OSGOOD, OF THE
CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH.

UNITARIANISM IN NEW YORK. — DR. OSGOOD AS A THEOLOGIAN. — DR. OSGOOD
IN THE PULPIT. — NEW CHURCH.

Dr. Osgood is a leader among Liberal Christians. He is a representative man. He has been in the ministry over thirty years, and has been settled over the same church in this city for more than eighteen years. He looks scarcely forty. His hair is dark, his step elastic, and for vigor and fervor in the pulpit he is in the prime of his strength. He was installed successor to Rev. Dr. Dewey, in 1849. He took rank at once among our foremost preachers. He early identified himself with the cause of education, and has felt especial interest in the commercial and religious welfare of the city. He is one of the best platform speakers in the land. He prepares his sermons with great care, leaves his manuscript in his study, and brings to his pulpit the freshness of extemporaneous speaking and the accuracy of a written discourse. He is moderate in his views, and is more of an eclectic than a partisan. He is a genial and intelligent companion, a man of

catholic spirit, and blends himself thoroughly with the humanities of the age.

UNITARIANISM IN NEW YORK.

There has always been a great deal of what usually passes as Liberal religion in New York. But most of it was outside of church organizations, and known as free-thinking in the olden time. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the present Liberal Christian body had no open representatives here except a small society of Universalists, who held orthodox doctrines in almost all points, except of final universal salvation. The liberals themselves, who held Christian usages, were generally scattered through the leading churches. The ultra churches, who quarrelled with all revelation, met in clubs and conventicles of infidels.

The first Unitarian preaching was given by Dr. Channing, April 25, 1819, in the Medical College, Barclay Street. This was followed by regular worship in a hall on the corner of Broadway and Reade Street. The first Congregational Church, as such, was incorporated on the 19th November, 1819. It laid the corner stone of its edifice in Chambers Street, April 29, 1820. Edward Everett preached the dedication sermon, January 20, 1821. Rev. William Ware was ordained pastor, December 18, 1821. On November 24, 1825, he laid the corner stone of the second Unitarian Church, on the corner of Prince and Mercer Streets. Over the second church Rev. William P. Lunt was ordained, June 19, 1828. Mr. Lunt was succeeded by Rev. Dr. Dewey in 1834. The second church edifice was destroyed by fire in 1837. In 1839 the congregation dedicated

the new Church of the Messiah, on Broadway, opposite Waverley Place. Dr. Osgood succeeded Dr. Dewey in 1849. Rev. Henry W. Bellows succeeded Mr. Ware in the first church, January 4, 1839, and removed to the new edifice, the Church of the Divine Unity, on Broadway, in 1845, and removed to All Souls Church, where Dr. Bellows now ministers. The third Unitarian Church, under Rev. O. B. Frothingham, was erected on Fortieth Street within a few years, after he had preached some time in a hall. He represents the more radical portion of the Unitarian body, while Dr. Bellows represents more the old denominational faith.

DR. OSGOOD AS A THEOLOGIAN.

While Dr. Osgood represents the Unitarian faith, as held by Channing and his associates, he has perhaps more of what is called the Broad Church spirit, and is less inclined to sectarian aggression, having always retained much of the moderate temper of his early pastor and teacher, President Walker. He is on friendly terms with our leading clergy of other denominations, and has exchanged with Methodist and Universalist ministers.

Dr. Osgood was born in the town of Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1812. In August, 1837, he was ordained over the Congregational Church in Nashua, New Hampshire. He had there a very successful ministry. He was called to the Westminster Church, at Providence, Rhode Island; whence he removed to the Church of the Messiah in this city. As a writer he has been prominent. He holds a ready pen, and writes with great force and elegance. In 1836 he edited the

Western Messenger, at Louisville, Kentucky. From 1850 to 1852 he edited the Christian Inquirer, in this city. He has been a very valuable contributor to the Christian Examiner, and to the Bibliotheca, and other quarterlies. His autobiography, entitled, "Mile Stones on Life's Journey," has had a very wide circulation. In 1858, before the students of Meadville Seminary, he gave his celebrated oration on the "Coming Church and its Clergy." In 1860, on the inauguration of President Felton, he gave the oration before the Alumni at Harvard. He was the preacher before the Ancient and Honorable Artillery at their two hundred and twenty-ninth anniversary in Boston. His theme, "The Old Line of Manhood, and the New," was handled with masterly ability. He also published a volume of essays, and many discourses and papers. For eighteen years he has written a series of vacation letters in the summer, from Plainfield, Connecticut, where he has a beautiful estate, which is made to combine literature and religion with landscape and art.

Dr. Osgood is somewhat of a Churchman in his feelings. He has an evening service, with chants and responses, much like the old church vespers. He has never, however, read prayer, except in the Sunday school and in certain ordinances. He keeps up the old Puritan usage of free prayer. This movement for a more responsive service, that he favors, has now widely extended itself. The American Unitarian Association are now publishing an extensive hymn book and liturgy in one volume. Dr. Osgood is very laborious in his parish. His pastoral visits are numerous. He preaches twice on the Sabbath, gives an address to the

Sunday school every Sunday afternoon, and conducts a large Bible class. His theology is very much of the liberal evangelical school of Germany. The late Richard Rothe is his favorite author.

DR. OSGOOD IN THE PULPIT.

He wears the silk gown without the bands. He comes in from his vestry, and assumes his duties with great reverence, answering well Cowper's description of the pastor, who, conscious of his awful charge, is anxious mainly that the flock he feeds should feel it too. In his preaching he dwells much on the divine nature of Christ, and presents the gospel less as a system of ethics, and more as a communication of divine life, than is common with Unitarian preachers. In his mind Jesus Christ is the actual Mediator between God and man, not only by the historical world, but by the perpetual spirit, and in him we find our true union to the Father. He keeps affectionate and fraternal relations with the Unitarian body, and takes the name, but never calls himself anti-Trinitarian. His Unitarianism consists in affirming the spirits of God, and his unwillingness to ascribe to them any plurality of persons, while he accepts the great manifestation of the one God, as Father, Son, and Spirit. He quotes with favor Dr. Dörner's definition of the Godhead, which affirms that "God is one absolute personality in three modes of being." He showed his Broad Church affinities by putting a volume of S. W. Robertson's sermons with one of Dr. Channing's under the corner stone of his new church.

He has always taken a decided patriotic stand in the

pulpit. Although not a preacher of party politics, when the war broke out he had the children of the Sunday school sing the Star-spangled Banner on the church steps while the flag was hoisted upon the church tower. He has always held Dr. Channing's anti-slavery views, and affirmed the wrong of slavery, yet deprecated insurrection and bloodshed on the part of agitators, until the slave power made war upon our northern freedom. Since the war he has favored kindly yet decided measures of reconstruction, such as shall secure the liberty of the freedman, and in due time restore all the seceding states. In his Thanksgiving sermon, November 28, 1867, he urged the people to repeat the administration of Washington, and call to the chair of Washington the bold and sagacious soldier who had borne the sword and upheld the flag of the father of his country.

Dr. Osgood mingles freely in social affairs, especially literary and public, and speaks often in their behalf. He is an impressive speaker, and secures rapt attention, whether in the pulpit or on the platform. He has practised extempore speaking from his boyhood, and is master of the art.

THE NEW CHURCH.

In 1849, when Dr. Osgood took charge of the Church of the Messiah, it was located far up town. It was surrounded entirely with magnificent dwellings, and was in the aristocratic part of our city. Nearly all the wealthy and eminent men lived in that neighborhood. A volcanic eruption would not have devastated that portion of the city more thoroughly, as far as dwellings are concerned, than have trade, hotels, and boarding-

houses. The Church of the Messiah was emptied. It was simply a question whether the pastor should follow his flock or abandon his ministry. Eligible lots were obtained on Fourth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street. On it the society has erected a church, which, for solidity, elegance, and completeness, has not been exceeded by any church edifice in New York. It is in the Rhenish style, and Byzantine Gothic. It is very churchly. The pulpit is unique, and embodies the altar and the cross. Every portion of the church is symbolical of the Messiah. His words are engraven on the arches and placed on the capitals. The portico is in a style of peculiar richness, and is adorned from designs wholly original, and taken from nature, expressive of charity, piety, beneficence, innocence, and love. The huge cross of stone which is placed on the side of the building, running from the wall beyond the eaves, is a very impressive symbol. The house will seat about twelve hundred, and cost about two hundred thousand dollars. The congregation is one of the richest in New York. Dr. Osgood's taste would lead to a less sumptuous edifice. But his people feel that they are entitled to one of the best houses of worship in the land, and so the present costly structure takes its place among the public religious institutions of New York.

LXXI.

BISHOP ONDERDONK.

WHEN I first became acquainted with Bishop Onderdonk, he was under the ban of his peers. He had been tried for alleged immoralities, and suspended as a bishop and as a priest. He was not allowed to officiate or to preach. He was decidedly the ablest man that has ruled the see of New York for many generations. In personal appearance he resembled Napoleon the First, of which fact he was quite proud. He was elevated to his position as bishop from the honorable post of assistant minister to Trinity. He assumed the mitre in troublesome times. What is now known as Ritualism was making havoc in the church — candles were placed on the altar in the day time; worshippers bowed at the name of the Savior; the priest turned his back on the congregation, and preached in the white surplice rather than in the black gown. Symbols of popery, as they were called, were introduced into many churches. Over these innovations Bishop Onderdonk threw the protection of his official position. The hot contest culminated in the ordination of Andrew Carey. His church notions were so extreme that he was accounted more of a Catholic than a Protestant. Against the

protest of many presbyters and laymen, the bishop decided to ordain Mr. Carey. While the services were in progress, two rectors, belonging to this city, left their pews, and walked up the aisles to the chancel, and openly protested against the admission of Carey into the church by ordination. This public protest created the wildest excitement in the congregation. The bishop pronounced the objections frivolous, and proceeded with the service. His friends declare that the persecutions which ended in his suspension originated with the Carey ordination.

Besides being High Church, Bishop Onderdonk had great executive ability, and ruled the diocese, it is said, with an iron hand. In the midst of the excitement created by the Carey ordination, the Episcopal Convention of the state came together. It was composed of churchmen high and low. The session was one long to be remembered. Men were too heated and excited for calm discussion. The bishop's rulings were sharp, and on more than one instance he shut off debate, as some thought, unfairly. Judge Duer, of the Superior Court, was in that convention. He was one of the ablest judges in the state, and a very influential member of the Episcopal Church. He was not friendly to the bishop, and the bishop knew it. He arose to address the convention. The bishop refused to hear him, and ordered him to his seat. He was not accustomed to such peremptory commands, and he insisted upon his right to the floor. The bishop thundered out, "Sit down, sir! sit down!" To this imperious command the judge submitted. The convention was greatly excited, and all knew the matter would not end there.

Within a year from that hour the bishop was silenced, and the ban was never removed.

The diocese of New York always believed their bishop to be a martyr. Had their voice been heeded, he would never have been silenced. To the day of his death he was their bishop, and he was *de facto* the bishop of New York. He lived in the Episcopal residence. His salary was paid by the standing committee, and paid first, before the assistant bishop could draw his pay.

The bishop regarded his trial and sentence as a punishment for his official acts, which he performed in good conscience. He thought the sentence unjust, but bowed to it with great meekness. During the long term of his suspension, the quiet and patient spirit that he exhibited — under what he conceived to be his wrongs — won the admiration of strangers, though it failed to touch the hearts of his brethren. The bitterness of his foes followed him to the tomb. On receiving his sentence, he withdrew at once from public gaze and from public life. He selected Dr. Seabury's church as his home, for the doctor had been his life-long friend. In this church Carey had been ordained, and was made assistant minister. All the honors and attentions that could be lavished upon the bishop by the Church of the Annunciation were paid to him. He attended the daily service of the church as well as the Sunday. It was a touching sight on communion days to see this aged man leave his pew alone, and lead in the communion, as became his rank, — his form, bent with sorrow rather than age, his step slow and

heavy, as if pressed down with some great grief, — and so kneel alone at the altar to receive the bread and wine.

After his suspension he seldom left his house, except to attend church. He withdrew from all social and ecclesiastical gatherings; received individuals who called upon him, but entertained no company. He seldom rode or walked in public. On the death of Bishop Wainwright, great efforts were made to restore the bishop. The House of Bishops refused the request, on the ground that the bishop not being penitent, he could not be forgiven. He replied that, having committed no wrong, he could not confess what he had not done. He was the wronged man, and had borne the injustice for fifteen years without complaint. His peers judged him guilty of contumely, and refused to lift the sentence. After the election of Bishop Potter, satisfied that there was no hope that the ban would be removed during life, he sank rapidly, and was soon borne to his burial. Few men have such a burial. His funeral was attended by an immense throng. The highest honors of the church were lavished upon his memory. His life-long friend, Dr. Seabury, preached a funeral sermon — which was more a eulogy than a sermon — from the felicitous text, "He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in that light." He was the beloved bishop of Trinity Church. They caused to be erected to his memory a costly memorial in marble, which adorns the Episcopal Ca-

thedral. With a delicate chisel the artist has represented a deadly serpent darting his venomous fangs at the bishop, — a symbol of the calumny that drove him from his throne, and pursued him till he was laid away in his tomb.