

[Second Universalist Society, New York City]

UNIVERSALISM AS THE TRUTH:  
SERMON BY DR. PULLMAN AT THE DEDICATION OF THE SAWYER CHURCH

The services of dedication at the Sawyer Memorial Church, in One Hundred and Twenty-seventh-street, near Lexington-avenue, were celebrated yesterday afternoon at 2 o'clock. The congregation is that of the old Orchard-Street Church, which was torn down nearly two years ago, and better known as the Second Universalist Society. The new building is Gothic in style, 40 by 80 feet, built of Westchester County white stone, and presents from the exterior a pleasing appearance. It was well filled at the hour for the commencement of the services, fully three-quarters of the congregation being ladies. There were many gray-bearded old men, though, old members of the Orchard-Street Church, and a sprinkling of young men. The pulpit platform was beautifully decorated with flowers. Back of it the wall was ornamented with the letters "S.M.C.," and underneath were the words "The Lord is in His Holy Temple" and on either side, "God is Love," and "All Souls are Mine." The services opened with an excellent organ voluntary, then followed the anthem, "Meet Me, O Lord," and the invocation, pronounced by the Rev. C. E. Nash, of Stamford, Conn. The Lord's Prayer was intoned, and then the dedication hymn, written expressly for this occasion by the Pastor, the Rev. D. M. Dodge, was read.

The sermon was delivered by the Rev. Dr. J. M. Pullman, of the Church of Our Saviour. He took for the text of his discourse Acts I:6,7, and 8, In the course of it Dr. Pullman said, "You and I believe that in the Universalist faith the kingdom of Christ has found the largest expression, both of its spirituality and its universality; that the love of God extends to every soul in the universe, and that that love is expressed in the mission of Christ, embracing the final redemption of every soul, one fold and one Shepherd. There are different kinds of Universalists. We are being weeded, and in this is our hope. Death and desertion decimate our ranks to make us stronger. The death of Chapin, the noble preacher and the great orator, is not a calamity to our Church, if by his death he has communicated his religious enthusiasm to his followers. God has never yet given a victory to a lazy, selfish, half-hearted, worldly people. To the half-hearted I say, try to carry your Universalism into some other church and enjoy it there. What have the other Churches to offer us? Success? No. We hope to do far better. What possible advantage does your creed give you over your orthodox neighbor? Nothing under heaven but a greater opportunity to love God and your fellow-men, and that is everything under heaven. It is sometimes asked what do people do who don't believe in endless hell want of a Church? This question shows the degradation of common theology. No use for virtue, except to

[Second Universalist Society, New York City]

keep us out of hell! We want, first, a Church to make us worthy of the destiny that is before us, and of the God who loves us. Second, we want it to bless our fellow-creatures with. We believe in a God of love. We dare to believe in the omnipotence of that love—that God does and will have His way in the universe which he has made. We want a Church to fit us for our destiny. If the spirituality of Christ's kingdom has found its largest expression in us, our works will show it. If we falter, our kingdom will be taken from us and given to worthier hands. There is no use of your dedicating this church to God unless you dedicate your hearts to him. He does not want brick and stone, but you, and through you all the world. Your glory is to be witness to the truth. A witness tells the truth, is not dumb. A witness to the truth is a personal illustration of that truth. Such witness is always believed. A witness to the truth who draws his power from on high always succeeds."

At the close of the sermon, which was earnestly listened to by the entire congregation, the choir sang, "Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," and then the Rev. D. M. Dodge read a short statement of the financial condition of the church. There was a small mortgage on it, but that did not fall due for a long time yet; but there was a floating debt of \$1,700, which should be paid at once, and he hoped the members of the congregation would include in the celebration of the dedication this payment. About \$600 were subscribed within half an hour. In the evening the Rev. D. M. Dodge was regularly installed as Pastor of the Church. The Rev. R. N. Bellows, Pastor of Unity Chapel; the Rev. S. A. Gardiner, of the Bleecker-Street Church [Third Universalist Society]; the Rev. J. Smith Dodge, of Stamford, Conn.; the Rev. J.[James] M. Pullman, of the Church of Our Saviour [Sixth Universalist Society]; the Rev. C. E. Nash, of Stamford, Conn.; and the Rev. Almon Gunnison [of Brooklyn] took part in the ceremonies.

*New York Times*, New York, Thu. 13 Jan 1881

Transcribed on 28 Jun 2005 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY