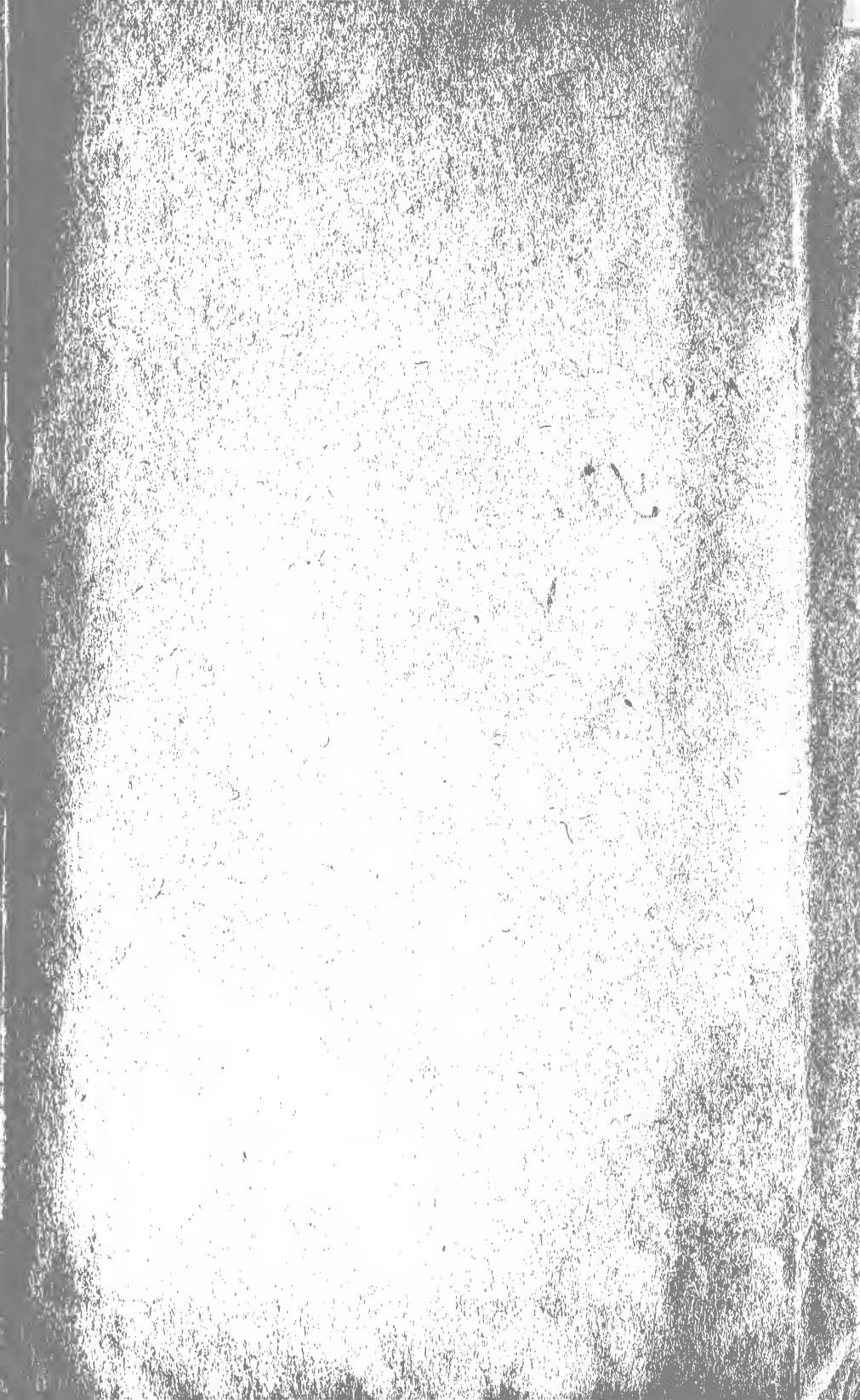
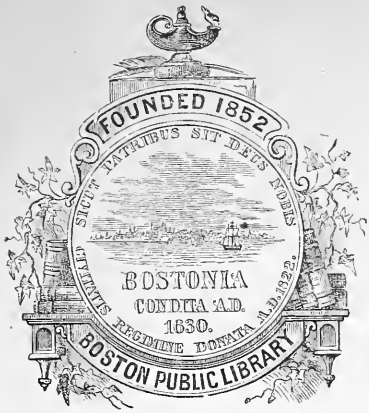


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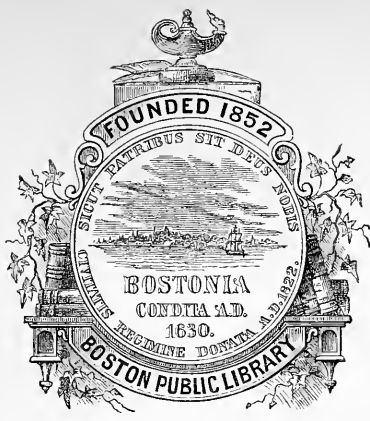
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PAMPHLETS.

H. W. Becker





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THE
CATHOLIC WORLD.

VOL. XII., No. 70.—JANUARY, 1871.

BEECHERISM AND ITS TENDENCIES.*

- It was said by somebody of *Ecce Homo*, an anonymous book which made some noise a few years ago, that it must have been written either by a man rising from rationalism to faith, or by a man falling from faith to rationalism. But, though it requires a nice eye to distinguish the twilight of the coming from that of the parting day, we hazard little in treating the twilight of these volumes as the evening not the morning crepuscule, and in regarding the Beechers as deepening into the darkness of unbelief, not as opening into the light of faith. We must, therefore, as our rule, interpret in all doubtful cases their language in a rationalistic or naturalistic sense, and not in a Christian sense.

Mr. Thomas K. Beecher, who is more frank and outspoken than his cunninger, more cautious, and more

timid brother, after recognizing what he regards as the distinctive excellences of each of "Our Seven Churches"—that is, the Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian, the Protestant Episcopal, the Methodist Episcopal, the Baptist, the Congregational, and the Liberal Christian—tells us very plainly that, abstractly considered, all churches are equally good or equally bad, and that the best church for a man is that in which he feels most at his ease, or which best satisfies him, or suits his peculiar constitution and temperament. "When thus he has tried all churches within his reach," he says, "then let him come back to any one that may seem best for him, and ask for the lowest place among its members. As he enters and is enrolled, let him say to every one that asks: I cannot tell whether this is the best church in the world, still less whether it is the true church. Of one thing only am I certain, it is the best church for me. In it I am as contented as a partly sanctified man can be this side of

* 1. *The Sermons of Henry Ward Beecher in Plymouth Church.* From verbatim reports by T. J. Ellinwood. First, Second, and Third Series, from September, 1869, to March, 1870. New York: J. B. Ford & Co. 1870. 3 vols. 8vo.

2. *Our Seven Churches.* By Thomas K. Beecher. The same. 1870. 16mo, pp. 167.

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the general assembly of the first-born in heaven" (*Our Seven Churches*, p. 142).

Yet this same writer had (p. 8) pronounced the doctrine and ritual of the Catholic Church throughout the world excellent, and had especially commended her (pp. 9, 10) for her exclusiveness or denial of the pretensions of all other churches, and for maintaining that there is no salvation out of her communion! This Beecher can swallow any number of contradictions without making a wry face; for he seems to hold that whatever *seems* to a man to be true is true for him, and that it matters not however false it may be if he esteemeth it true and is contented with it. For him, *seeming* is as good as *being*. Poor man, he seems never to have heard, at least never to have heeded, what the Scripture saith, that "There is a way that seemeth to a man just, but the ends thereof lead to death" (Prov. xiv. 12). The fact probably is that he believes in nothing, unless perchance himself, and looks upon truth as a mere *seeming*, a pure illusion of the senses or the imagination, or as a purely subjective conviction without objective reality.

It perhaps would not be fair to judge brother Henry by the utterances of brother Tom, but the Beecher family are singularly united, and all seem to regard brother Henry as their chief. No one of the family, unless it be Edward, the eldest brother, is very likely to put forth any views decidedly different from his, or which he decidedly disapproves. They all move in the same direction, though some of them may lag behind him while others may be in advance of him.

Although we have no difficulty in ascertaining for ourselves what Mr. Ward Beecher holds, so far as he holds anything, yet we do not

find it always easy to adduce decisive proofs that we rightly understand him. His language, apparently plain and direct, is singularly indefinite; his statements are seldom clear and certain, and have a marvellous elasticity, and may at need be stretched so as to take in the highest and broadest Protestant orthodoxy, or contracted so as to exclude everything but the most narrow, meagre, and shallow rationalism. They are an india-rubber band. You see clearly enough what he is driving at, but you cannot catch and hold him. His statements are so supple or so elastic that he can give them any meaning that may suit the exigencies of the moment. This comes, we presume, not from calculation or design, but from his loose manner of thinking, and from his total want of fixed and definite principles. His mind is uncertain, impetuous, and confused.

Beecherism, as we understand it, errs chiefly not in asserting what is absolutely false, but in mistiming or misapplying the truth, and in presenting a particular aspect of truth for the whole truth. Its leading thought is, as Freeman Clarke's, that Christianity is a life to be lived, not a doctrine or creed to be believed; and being a life, it cannot be drawn out and presented in distinct and definite statements for the understanding. One is a Christian not because he believes this or that doctrine, but because he has come into personal relations or sympathy with Christ, and lives his life. Its error is in what it denies, not in what it asserts, and its chief defect is in not telling who Christ is, what it is to come into personal relations with him, what is the way or means of coming into such relations, and in discarding or making no account of the activity of the intellect or understanding in

living the Christian life. Undoubtedly Christianity is a life to be lived, and we live it only by coming into intimate relations individually with Christ himself, as the church holds, only by being literally joined to him, born of him by the Holy Ghost, and living his life in the regeneration, as in natural generation we are born of and live the life of Adam. But Beecherism means not this, and, in fact, has no conception of it. It simply means that we must be personally in sympathy with Christ, and act from the stimulus of such sympathy. But this is no more than the boldest rationalism might say, for it implies no higher life than our Adamic life itself.

If by doctrine is meant only a view, theory, or "a philosophy" of truth, which is all that Beecherism can hold it to be, we agree that Christianity is not a doctrine to be believed; but the creed is not a view or theory of truth, but the truth itself. In believing it, it is the truth itself, not a view or theory of truth, that we believe. Christ is the truth, as well as the way and the life, and he must be received by faith as well as by love; for we not only cannot love what we do not intellectually apprehend, but Christ is supernatural, and can be apprehended only by faith and not by science. Christ is the Word—the Logos—made flesh, and his life must then be primarily the life of intelligence, and therefore we can enter upon it only by faith. Christianity is a religion for the intellect, whose object is truth, as well as a religion for the heart, or our appetitive nature, whose object is good. Beecherism overlooks this fact, and places Christianity, religion, in love. Love, it says—and says truly, when by love is meant the supernatural virtue of charity, *caritas*—is the end or perfection of the law; but it forgets that the

understanding must precede the love and present the object, or nothing is loved. What Beecherism calls love is simply a subjective want, a blind craving of the soul for what it has not and knows not. Even Plato, high as is the rank which he assigns to love or our appetitive nature, as St. Thomas calls it, does not hold that love alone suffices. According to him, it is only on the two wings, intelligence and love, that the soul soars to the Empyrean, to "the First Good and the First Fair."

There is no love without science, and the science must always precede the love and present its object. Our Lord even includes love in the science or knowledge, for he says, in addressing his Father, "This is everlasting life, that they may *know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (St. John xvii. 3). All through the New Testament love is connected with knowledge or faith, and the knowledge of the truth is connected with salvation. "The truth shall make you free," "*Veritas liberabit vos,*" says St. John. "God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth," says St. Paul, who also says to the Corinthians, "Brethren, do not become children in understanding, albeit in malice; be children, but in understanding be perfect," or "be men" (1 Cor. xiv. 20).

It is the grave fault of Protestantism itself, especially in our times, that it makes little or no account of intelligence. It is essentially unintellectual, illogical, and irrational, and its tendency is to place religion almost entirely in the emotions, sentiments, and affections, which are in themselves blind and worthless, are even worse, if not enlightened and restrained by truth intellectually apprehended by faith. When not so enlightened and restrained, they become

fanaticism. Beecherism is even more unintellectual than the Protestantism of the Reformers themselves. It divorces our sympathetic nature from our intellectual nature, and would fain persuade us that it is our higher nature. This is bad psychology, and to its prevalence is due the incapacity of Protestants to apprehend the higher and profounder truths of the spiritual order. The affections are either affections of the sensitive soul or affections of the rational soul. If affections of the rational soul, they are rational in their origin and principle, and impossible without intelligence. If affections of the sensitive soul, they have no moral or religious character, though they incline to sin; but are, when they escape the control of reason, that very "flesh," or concupiscence, the Christian struggles against. Beecherism, in reality, makes the flesh our higher nature, and requires us to walk after the flesh, not after the spirit, as do and must all systems that place religion in sympathy or love without intelligence. All the affections of our nature not enlightened by intelligence and informed by reason or faith are affections not of our higher but of our lower nature, and when strong or dominant become destructive passions.

Beecherism, in rejecting intelligence or in making light of all dogmatic Christianity or objective faith, and substituting a purely subjective faith, only follows the inevitable tendency of all Protestantism emancipated from the civil power; for Protestantism recognizes no authority competent to enjoin dogmas, or to present or define the object of faith. It can give for a creed only opinions. It could not, in abandoning the church, if left to itself, avoid in its free development eliminating from Christianity the entire creed, all dogmas, doctrines, or statements, which are credi-

ble only when made on an infallible authority, which no Protestants have or can have. Protestantism is, therefore, in its developments obliged either to become open, undisguised infidelity, or to resolve Christianity into a purely subjective religion—a religion consisting in and depending solely on our interior emotional, sentimental, or affectional nature, and incapable of intellectual or objective statement, and needing none. The tendency of all Protestantism must always be either to religious indifferentism or to religious fanaticism.

We do not find from the sermons before us that Beecherism, which is a new but not improved edition of Bushnellism endorsed by Mr. T. K. Beecher, explicitly denies the Christian mysteries; neither do we find that it explicitly recognizes them; while it is not doubtful that the whole current of its thought excludes them. What are its views of God, and especially of the person and nature of our Lord, we are not distinctly told, but evidently it has no conception of the tri-personality of the one Divine Being, the personality of the Holy Ghost, or the two for ever distinct natures, the human and the divine, hypostatically united in the one divine person of Christ. As far as we can ascertain, it recognizes no distinction of person and nature, and is unaware of the fact that the Word, who is God, took to himself, in the Incarnation, human nature, and made it as really and as truly his own nature, without its ceasing to be human nature, as my human nature joined to my personality is my nature. It would seem to hold that Christ is God or the divine nature clothed with a human body without a human soul, or, rather, that Christ is God humanly represented or personated.

In a sermon on the "Consolations

of the Sufferings of Christ," Mr. Ward Beecher seems to regard Christ, who was tempted and suffered in his divine nature, yet without sin, in all points as we are tempted and suffer, as suffering in his divine nature, and from that fact he argues that his sufferings were absolutely infinite. But he asks:

"Can a Divine Being suffer? I should rather put the question, Can one be a Divine Being in such a world and over such a world as this, and not suffer? If we carve in our imagination a perfect God, with the idea that perfectness must be that which is relative to himself alone, that he must be perfect to himself in intelligence, perfect to himself in moral character, perfect to himself in beauty, and in transcendent elevation above all those vicissitudes and troubles which arise from imperfection—if thus we make our God, and in no way give him roots in humanity, in no way lead him to have sympathy with infirmity, then we have not a perfect God. We have a carved selfishness embellished. We have a being that cannot be Father to any thought that springs from the human heart. . . .

"A God that cannot suffer, and suffer in his *Godship nature*, can scarcely be presented to the human soul, in all its weaknesses and trials and wants, so that it shall be acceptable. We need a suffering God. It was the *very ministration of Christ to develop that side of the Divine Being*—the susceptibility of God to suffer through sympathy, as the instrument and channel of benevolence by which to rescue them that suffer through sin" (*Third Series*, p. 38).

We had supposed that man has his roots in God, not God his roots in man, and that the ministration of Christ was to redeem, elevate, and perfect man, not to develop and perfect or fulfil the Divine Being; but we had done so without consulting the Beechers. If the Divine Being on any side needs, ever needed, or ever could need, to be developed, the Divine Being is not eternally perfect, is not perfect being in itself, or being

in its plenitude; consequently, God is not eternally self-existent, independent, self-sufficing being, as theologians maintain, and therefore is not God, or, in other words, there is no God; and then nothing is or can be. We must in our charity suppose the preacher either says he knows not what, or that he does not mean what he says. It is not our business to rede the Beecher riddles; but probably, if it was, Bushnellism might help us. Dr. Bushnell, with a slight tincture of Swedenborgianism, regards Christ not precisely as God or man, but as a scenic display, as the representation or personation under a human form and human relations to our senses, feelings, sympathies, and imagination, of what the Divine Being really is, not in himself, but in regard to man. But this, though it might explain, would not save Beecherism from the charge of making Christ an anthropomorphous representation of God, not God himself, or the Word made flesh; nor from that of maintaining that God is passible in his divine nature, "his Godship nature." The Word or Son is indeed the express image of God and the brightness of his glory, yet in the divine not the human form; for the Word is God, and eternally, and it is only as made flesh that he has a human form and human relations; but in this sense he is man, not a representation of God humanly related. No man who believes in the tri-personality of the Divine Being, or in the hypostatic union of the two natures in the one Divine Person of the Word, could ever use the expressions we have quoted, or regard Christ as a scenic representation or personation of the Divine Being.

Beecherism undeniably anthropomorphizes God, and regards him, as does Swedenborg, as the great or perfect Man, or as man carried up to infi-

nity. It supposes the attributes of God are the attributes of man infinitely magnified. This is what it means, we suppose, by saying God has his "roots in humanity." Being man infinitely developed and perfected, God knows and loves us by sympathy, and is able to share our joys and sorrows, and suffer in all the vicissitudes and troubles which spring from our imperfections, for he has in himself, in its infinitude, all that we have or experience in ourselves. This supposes that God is made in the image and likeness of man, not man in the image and likeness of God. The type and principle of man are indeed in God, and his works copy his divine essence, but not he them. God cannot suffer in his divine nature, for all suffering arises from imperfection, and he is perfect being in its plenitude; therefore impassible, and necessarily, from the fulness of his own nature, eternally and infinitely blessed. He knows not us from his likeness to us, nor from an experience like ours, but in himself, from his own perfect knowledge of himself, in whose essence is our type and principle, and whose own act is the cause of all we are, can do, or become. He knows us not by sympathy with us, for he is the adequate object of his own intelligence, and cannot depend on his creatures, or anything out of himself, for any knowledge or perfection whatever. He knows and feels all we do or suffer in himself, in his own essence and act creating and sustaining us. He loves us in himself, and in the same act, because he has created us from his own superabounding goodness, and because we live and move and have our being in him, not because he feels with us, as Beecherism would have us believe. No attribute of the divine nature does or can depend for its exercise or perfection on us, or on anything exterior to or distinct from

his own Divine Being. Yet as we are his creatures, sustained by his creative act, and as that act is the free act of infinite goodness or love—*caritas*—his love in that act surrounds, pervades, our entire existence in a manner infinitely more tender and touching to us, and effects in us and for us infinitely more than the closest and most sympathetic human love or kindness. We are held in the very arms of infinite love, live and breathe in infinite goodness, and we are nothing without it.

God is perfect being in himself; consequently, always the adequate object of his own activity, whether of intelligence or love, as we are taught in the mystery of the Trinity. It is in himself, in his own essence, in which is the type or principle of our existence, and whose decree or act is the cause of all we are, can be, do, or suffer, that he knows and loves us, has compassion on our infirmities, forgives us our sins, works out our salvation, and enables us to participate in his own beatitude, and, when glorified, even in his own divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4). His love is wonderful, and past finding out; it is too high, too broad, too tender, and its riches are too great for us to be able to comprehend it. To be able to comprehend it, we should need to be able to comprehend God himself, in his own infinite being; for his very being is love and goodness,—*Caritas est Deus*, as says the blessed apostle. No man knoweth the Father save the Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him. The error of Beecherism here, as well as of many other *isms*, is in assuming that the type of God and his attributes is in man, not the type of man in God, which anthropomorphizes the Divine Being.

Yet it is perfectly allowable to say that God suffers and is tempted in all

points as we are, though without sin, if we speak of Jesus Christ the Incarnate God. The Word or Son is God; the person of our Lord in the divine nature or being is strictly divine; and as it is always the person that acts or suffers, whatever Christ does or suffers, God does or suffers; for in Christ there is human nature, but no human person. But God cannot suffer in his divine nature, and hence, if our Lord had had only the one divine nature—which he always had and has in its fulness—he never could have suffered and died on the cross to redeem and save us. Beecherism, which regards Christ as the representation of the Divine Being under a human form and to our human sympathies and affections, denies the very possibility of his making any real atonement for man, for he has of his own no nature at all. He is not himself real being that suffers, but its representation or personation; and therefore his sufferings are representative, as the sufferings and death represented on the stage. Hence, it transfers to the Divine Being, to God in his divine nature, who cannot suffer, whatever suffering is represented in the person and life of our Lord. But our Lord is not a representative being, but the Divine Being himself, and he does not personate the divine nature—he is it. He does not in the Incarnation part with his divine nature, but takes human nature up into hypostatic or substantial union with his divine person. As the Divine Being is one divine nature, being, or essence, in three persons, so is Christ one divine person in two natures. Being at once perfect God and perfect man, and having a human as well as a divine nature, he could be tempted as we are, could sympathize with us, share our sorrows, bear our griefs, be obedient to his Father, suffer, even die on the cross for us; but in his hu-

man nature only, not in his divine nature. His sufferings could not be infinite in the sense Beecherism asserts; for the human nature even of God is finite; but his sufferings and obedience have an infinite value, because the sufferings and obedience of an infinite person.

Beecherism gives us no clear or satisfactory account of what our Lord is. All we can say is, that it does not treat his person as the Second Person of the Godhead nor as the Word made flesh; but holds him, as far as we can get at its thought, as a representative person, as Bushnellism does, representing or personating God or the Divine Being, as we have said more than once, under a human form and in human relations. But it not only eliminates the Word or Son from the Godhead; it eliminates, also, the Third Person, by denying with certain ancient heretics the personality of the Holy Ghost. In the sermon on "The Holy Spirit," we read:

"The Divine Being is not merely a person, superlative, infinite, who sits enshrined and, as it were, hidden in the centre of his vast domain. We are taught that there is an effluence of spirit-power, and that the Holy Spirit pervades the universe. It is to the *personality* of God what the light and heat are to the sun itself. For, though the sun is in a definite sphere and position, and has its own globular mass, yet it is felt through myriads and myriads of leagues of space, and is therefore present by its effects and power. And though God is not present [*sic*] and heaven is the place where he dwells, yet the divine influence pervades the universe. [The divine influence wider than the Divine Being!] The mental power, the thought-power, the Spirit-power, impletes the rational universe" (*Third Series*, p. 87).

In this extract, personality and nature are not distinguished, and the personality of God is assumed to be one, as his being, nature, or essence

is one, which excludes both the Holy Ghost and the Son as persons from the Godhead. The Holy Ghost, instead of being represented as the Third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, is denied to be a person at all, and defined to be simply an effluence or influence of the one person of God; or to be to the personality of God what the light and heat of the sun are to the sun itself. An effluence, an emanation, or an influence is not a personal distinction in the Divine Being, and Mr. Beecher evidently does not so regard it; for he speaks of it as *it*, not as *him*, and makes it not the actor, but the effect of the person acting. Light and heat are not distinctions *in* the sun, as the Divine Persons are in the Divine Being; but are, in so far as not the sun itself, distinguishable *from* it, as the effect is distinguishable from the cause. The Divine PERSONS are distinguishable from one another, we grant, and we regard the Father as principle, the Son as medium, and the Holy Ghost as end; but they are distinctions in God, not *from* God; or distinctions in the Divine Being, not from it. Obviously, then, whatever else Beecherism may accept of the Christian faith, it does not accept the Mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity, but really denies it. The Beechers, perhaps, are not theologians enough to know it, but the denial of the Trinity is the denial of God as living God, by reducing the Divine Being, with the old Eleatics, to a dead and unproductive unity, as do also all Unitarians as distinguished from Trinitarians. He who denies the Trinity, if he knows what he does, denies God as much as does the avowed atheist. Unitarianism that excludes the tri-personality of God is really atheism, and the God it professes to recognize is only an abstraction.

It is also evident that Beecherism

does not accept the mystery of the Incarnation, out of which grows the whole distinctively Christian order, without which man cannot fulfil his existence and attain the end or beatitude for which he is created. It is impossible to assert the Incarnation when the three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity are denied, for it supposes them and depends on them. Christ, according to Beecherism, is, as with Bushnellism and Swedenborgianism, not the Second Person or Word of God assuming human nature; but the manifestation, personation, or representation of the Divine Being under a human form and relations, which is simply no Incarnation at all. Rejecting or not accepting the Incarnation, Beecherism loses Jesus Christ himself, and with him the whole teleological order, which is founded by the Word made flesh, and without which creation cannot be fulfilled, and must remain for ever incipient or incomplete, and fail of its final cause; man must then for ever remain below his destiny, craving beatitude but never gaining it—the doom or hell of the reprobate.

Beecherism is far from having penetrated the depth of the Christian order, and understands little of the relations and reasons of the Christian dispensation. It sees nothing of the profound truths brought to light by the Christian faith. It sees no reason why St. Peter, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, could say: "There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). It conceives of no reason in the very order and nature of created things why it should be so. But how could man exist but by proceeding from God through the divine act creating him? and how could he fulfil his existence but by returning to God, without absorption in him, as

his final cause or supreme good? How could he return without the teleological order? or how could there be a teleological order without Christ, or the Word made flesh? Nothing is more shallow, more meagre, or more insignificant than the Beecher Christianity. It does well to depreciate the intellect, for there is nothing in it for the intellect to apprehend.

Nor less does Beecherism misapprehend and misrepresent the Christian doctrine of the new birth or regeneration. It attaches no meaning, as far as we have been able to perceive, to the palingenesia of which both our Lord and St. Paul speak. Our Lord says expressly (St. John iii. 3), "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Beecherism, in very properly rejecting the Methodistic process of "getting religion," and the Calvinistic process of "obtaining a hope," goes farther, and denies the necessity of regeneration itself, and seems to suppose man can return to God without a teleological order, or being born into the teleological life. It assumes that every one is born by natural generation on the plane of his destiny, and may by proper training and education fulfil his existence, and attain beatitude. Nothing more than the proper development and training of one's natural powers or faculties, it teaches, is necessary to make one an heir of the kingdom of God. This is the hobby of the feminine Beechers, and perhaps not less so of the masculine Beechers. But the full development and right training of our natural faculties do not raise us above the order of generation, and only enable us to attain at best a natural or a created beatitude, which is simply no beatitude at all for a rational existence; for it is finite, and nothing finite can satisfy the rational soul. The soul craves, hungers, and thirsts for an un-

bounded good, and demands an infinite beatitude, the only beatitude there is or can be for it.

But the only unbounded good, the only infinite beatitude, is God; for God alone is infinite. All that is not God is creature, and all that is creature is finite. God, then, is our final cause as well as our first cause. We proceed from God through creation developed by generation, and we return to him through regeneration by grace as our supreme good. Yet God, alike as our first cause and as our last end, is supernatural, above nature, above everything created. The natural, that is, the creature, cannot in the nature of things be the medium of the supernatural. We must then have a supernatural medium of return to God as our last end or beatitude, or not return at all, but remain for ever below our destiny, and for ever suffer the misery of an unfulfilled existence. Faith teaches us that this medium is the man Christ Jesus, or the Word made flesh, the only mediator of God and men. Christianity is simply Christ himself, and the means he institutes or provides through the Holy Ghost to enable us to rise to him, live his life, and return to God, our supreme good, who is our supreme good because he is the supreme good itself, and the only real good.

Christ cannot be our medium except as we are united to him and live his life. Live his life we cannot unless united to him, and united to him we cannot be unless born of him in the order of regeneration, as we are born of Adam in the order of generation. Hence our Lord says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We can no more live the teleological life of Christ without being born of him, than we can the initial Adamic life without being born of Adam. As

we had no faculties by the exercise of which we could attain to birth of Adam into the order of generation, so by no exercise or development of our natural powers can we be born of Christ in the order of regeneration. Or, as we could not generate ourselves, neither can we regenerate ourselves. We can of ourselves alone no more enter the teleological order than we could the initial order. This entrance into the teleological order St. Paul calls even a "new creation," and the one who has entered "a new creature," and we need not say that one cannot become a new creation or a new creature by development, education, or training.

Now, whatever Beecherism may pretend, it recognizes no new birth at all. It is necessary, it concedes, that the soul should come into personal relations with Jesus Christ, and that we should live his life, but we grow into his life and live his life by love; and to be in personal relations with him means only to be in sympathy with him. Just begin to love Christ, it says, and then you will learn what his life is, and will love him more and more, and grow more and more into sympathy with him. But one might as well say to the child not yet born, or conceived even, "Just begin to live the life of Adam, and then you will be able by continued effort and perseverance to grow to be a man," as to say to a man not born of Christ through the Holy Ghost, "Just begin to live the life of Christ, and you will be able to live it," or, "Just enter the teleological order, or kingdom of heaven, and you will be in it." *C'est le premier pas qui coûte*. Once get into sympathy with Christ, and you are—in sympathy with him. All very true; but how take that first step? How begin to live without being born? "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Beecherism

must require one to act before being born, or else it must deny the teleological or Christian order altogether.

Since it professes to be Christian, Beecherism cannot well overlook the action of the Holy Ghost in the Christian life; but it does not, through any action of the Holy Spirit which it recognizes, get the new birth or regeneration. The Holy Ghost, we have seen, it resolves into a divine effluence, or the spirit-power of God, not a personal distinction in God, and this effluence only stimulates or excites our natural life.

"This divine and universal effluence," it says, "is the peculiar element in which the soul is destined to live, and find its inspiration and its true food. For although we find man first in this world, and he receives his first food here, because he begins at a low point, yet as he develops and goes up step by step, higher faculties, requiring a higher kind of stimulus or food, are developed; and he reaches manhood at that point in which he begins to act from the influences that are divine and spiritual, and that flow directly from God. Up to that point he lives as an animal, and beyond that point as a man.

"This divine Spirit, or, if I may so say, the diffusive mind of God, which pervades all the realms of intelligent beings, and which is the atmosphere the soul is to breathe, the medium of its light, the stimulus of its life, acts in the first place as a *general excitement*. It develops the whole nature of a man, by rousing it to life. We are familiar with the gradations of this excitement."

These gradations are: 1, *Nervous excitement*, produced by physical stimuli; 2, *Mesmeric excitement*, produced by the action of men on one another; 3, *Æsthetic excitement*, which gives rise to genius, art, and philosophy; and, 4, *The highest or divine excitement*. After describing these several degrees of excitement, produced by the divine effluence, it proceeds to ask and answer the question—

“What is the result of this supernatural divine stimulus upon man’s nature? It seems to act on the sensuous and physical nature only indirectly, by acting upon the higher life. It is, in general, an *awakening* of the faculties. It fires men. It develops their latent forces. We go all our life long with iron in the soil under our feet, and do not know that it is hidden there; and we go all our life long carrying gold in the mountains of our souls without knowing that it is there. We carry in us ranges of power that we know very little of.

“And the divine Spirit, in so far as it acts upon the human soul, or is permitted to awaken it, *develops* its latent forces. It carries forward a man’s nature, opening in it, often, faculties which have been absolutely dormant. There are many men who have eyes that they have never opened, and that are capable of seeing truths which they never have seen. They are therefore called *blind*. And they begin to see only when the divine Spirit acts upon their souls; because there are certain faculties which will not act except when they are brought under the divine influence. Then it is that these faculties begin life, as it were” (*Third Series*, pp. 87-89).

Thus far it is certain* that there is no new birth asserted; there is only an awakening into activity, under the stimulus of the divine effluence, of natural forces hitherto latent, or the higher faculties of the soul hitherto dormant, and which without it are not, perhaps cannot be, awakened, developed, or excited to act. This means that the soul rises to its higher life, or the exercise of its higher faculties, only under the influence of supernatural stimulants, but not that it is translated from the natural order of life into the supernatural. The divine stimulants only develop what is already in the soul. These divine influences create or infuse nothing into the soul; they only excite to activity what is latent or dormant in the soul, and therefore do not lift it into a higher order of life; and it is only the soul living in the super-

natural order that can assimilate supernatural food or stimulants.

Yet Beecherism would seem, we confess, to go a little farther. It continues:

“It is, however, still beyond this that . . . the divine Spirit seems to act upon the human mind, by *imparting to it a fineness of susceptibility and moral sympathy*, by which the soul is brought into immediate conscious and personal communion with God, and from which the most illustrious events in man’s history are deduced” (*ib.* p. 89).

But, since the Beechers are on the downward track, this must be taken as an effort to explain away, while seeming to retain, the mystery of regeneration. All that is imparted—better say, produced—is a finer sensibility and a higher moral sympathy; no new principle is imparted or infused into the soul that elevates it to the plane of the supernatural. It is only the highest degree of that general excitement, varying in degree, from the lowest point to the highest, which Beecherism defines the effect of the divine effluence on the soul to be. The true doctrine of the Holy Ghost, we are told on the same page, is “that it is the influence of the divine mind, of the whole being of God, as it were, sent down into the realm of rational creatures, hovering above them as a stimulating atmosphere, and food for the soul; and that when men *rise into* this atmosphere, which is the nature of God diffused in the world, they come to a higher condition of faculties.” Yes, when they *rise* into it. Always the same difficulty of the first step. When men have risen into this stimulating atmosphere, they can breathe it; but how are they to rise into it? Begin to love God a little, and you will be stimulated to love him more and more, till you love him perfectly. No doubt of it. But how begin? The

atmosphere of God is hovering above us, and Beecherism not only requires us, but assumes that we are able of ourselves, without the infusion of new life, and even without the stimulating atmosphere itself, to lift ourselves up to it, and henceforth to live and breathe in it, and assimilate it as food for the soul.

The illustrations prove it. On the same page again, it is said of the men who have risen to this atmosphere, that "they find whereas their heart was like a tree in the far north, which, although it could blossom a little, could never ripen its fruit, because the summer is so short, now their heart is like that *same tree* carried down toward the equator, where it brings its fruit to ripeness." But here is implied only a change in the exterior conditions; the seminal principle, the principle of life and fecundity, was in the tree when in "the far north" not less than it was when "carried down toward the equator." Whatever "fineness of susceptibility and moral sympathy" the divine effluence in its action on the soul may impart, it certainly does not, on the Beecher theory, infuse into the soul or beget in it the principle of a new and higher life than our natural life, which is what is necessary in order to assert the new birth.

Beecherism is not, we presume, intentionally warring against the Christian mystery of regeneration, for it is not likely that it knows anything about it. What moves it is hostility to the Methodistic and Evangelical cant about "experiencing religion," "getting religion," "obtaining hope," "being hopefully converted," in a sort of moral cataclysm, prior to which all one's acts, even one's prayers and offerings, are sins, hateful to God. The Beechers, brought up in the Evangelical school, have become tho-

roughly disgusted with this feature of it, and have simply aimed to get rid of it, and to find a regular way by which the child can grow up as a Christian. Rejecting with all Protestants sacramental grace, infused virtues, and baptismal regeneration, they have had no alternative but either to accept the moral cataclysm produced by the immediate and irresistible inrushing of the Holy Ghost, as all Evangelicalism asserts, or else to maintain that our natural life, properly developed and directed, grows of itself into the true life of Christ, and suffices to secure our beatitude. They do well to reject the Evangelical doctrine of conversion, but, knowing no other alternative, they in doing so bring Christ, the Holy Ghost, the Christian or teleological order of life, and man's beatitude, down to the order of natural generation, lose the palingenesia, and of course everything distinctively Christian.

Dr. Bellows, a well-known Unitarian minister in this city, commenting not long since on a sermon by Henry Ward Beecher, said it was "as good Unitarianism as he wanted," and we do not think that, in saying so, he wronged either Beecherism or Unitarianism. Certain it is that Beecherism rejects in substance, if not in so many words, the mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity or the tri-personality of God; the mystery of the Word made flesh, or the Incarnation; the mystery of redemption; the mystery of regeneration and of mediatorial or sacramental grace; and what more could any Unitarian ask of it? It would be easy to show that the Beechers make no account of the *gratia Christi*, and assign to Christ no office in man's redemption, salvation, or beatitude. The influence of the divine spirit that Beecherism asserts is supernatural only in the sense that the creative act of God producing us from

nothing is supernatural. It is the nature of God that pervades the world, and is only what theologians call the divine presence in all his works sustaining and developing them in the natural order, or the divine concurrence in every act of every one of them. It is supernatural, for God is supernatural, and all his acts and influences are supernatural, but creating no supernatural order of life. Nay, hardly so much as this; for we are told that God is not everywhere present, and his influence or effluence, being inseparable from himself, cannot be more universal than his being or extend beyond it; and hence there may, if Beecherism is right, be existences where God is not.

After this, it can hardly be necessary to descend to further details; for, if Christianity be anything more than the order of genesis, or pure naturalism, the Beechers have no Christian standing, even in simple human faith. They know nothing of mediatorial grace; and these sermons make as light of the sacrament of orders as their author, in the Astor House scandal, did of the sacrament of matrimony. The language of Scripture, however plain and express, has no authority for him. He admits that one has no authority to preach the Gospel unless he descends from the apostles, but holds that every one who is able to preach it with zeal and effect does descend from them. He has his orders and mission in the inward anointing of the Holy Ghost—in whom, by the way, he does not believe—although the Scripture teaches that it is through “the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” that one receives the power—that is, the Holy Ghost; and the mission is given in a regular way, through those already ordained and authorized by our Lord himself to confer jurisdiction. Ward Beecher goes on the principle

that “the proof of the pudding is in the eating;” but if the pudding happens to be poisoned or unwholesome, the proof comes too late after the eating. Prudent persons would require some guarantee before eating that the pudding is not poisoned or unwholesome, but is what it is said to be. Ward Beecher is no doubt a very respectable cook in his way, but we have yet to learn that the Plymouth congregation receives much spiritual nutriment from his cooking.

It may be a question whether they who die in sin, or under the penalty of sin, are or are not doomed to a hell of literal fire; there also may be questions raised as to the degree or intensity of the sufferings of the damned, and perhaps as to the principle on which their sufferings are inflicted and are reconcilable with the infinite power and goodness of the Creator; but among intelligent believers in Christ as the mediator of God and man, and the founder and principle of the teleological order, there can be none as to the fact that the suffering is and must be everlasting. Every one capable of suffering must suffer as long as he remains unperfected and below his destiny. The damned, whatever else may be said of them, are those who have failed, through their own fault or that of their superiors, to fulfil their existence or attain their end, and thus are inchoate, incomplete, or unperfected existences, and therefore necessarily suffer all the miseries that spring from unsatisfied or unfulfilled nature. As at death men pass from the world of time to eternity, in which there is no succession and no change, the damned must necessarily remain for ever in the state in which they die, and, therefore, their suffering must be everlasting.

Yet Beecherism, without explicitly affirming universal salvation, decid-

edly doubts that the sufferings of the damned, if any damned there are, will be everlasting, as we may see in *The Minister's Wooing*, and in the *Defence of Lady Byron*, by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, as well as from a recent sermon by Mr. Henry Ward Beecher, if correctly reported; although a more logical conclusion from its premises would be the everlasting misery of all men, for it makes no provision for their redemption and return through Christ the mediator to God as their final cause or beatitude. From some things we read, we infer that Beecherism inclines to spiritism, as it certainly does to mesmerism, which is only incipient or tentative spiritism, and it probably accepts in substance the doctrine of the spirits—the doctrine of devils?—that there is very little change in passing from this world to the next, which, like this, is a world of time and change, in which the development begun here may be continued, and the spirits rise or sink from circle to circle according to the progress they make or fail to make; but always free and able, if they choose, to better their condition, and enter higher and higher circles up to the highest. Lady Byron, who appears to have been a spiritist, and who regarded her husband, Lord Byron, as the most execrable of men, still expected, if we may believe Mrs. Beecher Stowe, to meet him in the spirit-world wholly purified, and a beatified saint, standing near the throne of the Highest! Great theologians and philosophers are the spirits.

Beecherism jumps astride every popular movement, or what appears to it likely to be a popular movement, of the day. It went in for abolition, negro suffrage, and negro eligibility, and now goes in for negro equality, in all the relations of society,

female suffrage and eligibility, and reversing the laws of God, so as to make the woman the head of the man, not man the head of the woman. Henry Ward Beecher is at the head of the woman's rights movement, so earnestly defended by his lackey of the *Independent*. Beecherism goes in also for liberty of divorce, and virtually for polygamy and concubinage or free love, and free religion, while it retains enough of its original Calvinistic spirit to require the state to take charge of our private morals, and determine by statute what we may or may not eat, drink, or wear, when we may go to bed or get up; that is, it would clothe the magistrate with authority to enforce with civil pains and penalties whatever it may for the moment hold to be for the interest of private and social morals, and to prohibit in like manner whatever it holds to be against them to-day, though it may hold the contrary to-morrow. The Beecher tendency is to throw off all dogmatic faith; to reject or to make no account of the Christian mysteries; to remove all restraints on the emotions, affections, and passions; to place the essence of marriage not in the free consent of the contracting parties, but in the sentiment or passion of love, obligatory, and lawful even, only so long as the love lasts; to regard all authority as tyrannical that would restrain one from holding and uttering the most false, dangerous, and blasphemous theories; and at the same time, in the true Calvinistic spirit, to demand that the magistrate shall repress whatever it, in the exercise of its liberty, judges to be wrong, and enforce with the strong hand whatever it holds to-day to be enjoined by humanity, though directly contrary to what it held yesterday. It substitutes change for stability, passion for reason, opinion for faith, desire for

hope, philanthropy for charity, fanaticism for piety, humanity for God, and, in the end, demonism for humanity, since man, as he renounces God, inevitably comes under the power of Satan.

That Beecherism has reached this extreme point we do not allege, but we think we have shown that this is the point to which it tends. But the Beechers are a representative family, and represent the spirit and tendency of their age and country. The spirit of the age moves and agitates them, the current of the modern unchristian civilization flows through them, and their heart feels and responds to every vibration of the popular heart. "They are of the world, and the world heareth them," and sustains them, let them do what they will. Mrs. Beecher Stowe's *Byronics*, though assailed and refuted by the leading journals and periodicals of the Old World and the New, have not damaged her reputation, and she, perhaps, is more popular than ever. The world cannot spare its most faithful feminine representative. Henry Ward Beecher survives the Astor House scandal without loss of prestige, and proves that the dominant sentiment of the American people makes as light of the marriage bond as he did, and holds it is no more an offence against Christian morals for a man to marry another man's wife than he does. He only represented the popular sentiment respecting marriage and divorce. He in fact gained credit, instead of losing it, by an act which shocked every man and woman who believes that marriage is sacred and inviolable, and that what God has joined together no human authority can sunder. Henry Ward Beecher is probably the most popular preacher, as Mrs. Beecher Stowe is the most popular novelist, in the country.

The Beecher family, we grant, are

a gifted family, but not more so than thousands of others. They have talent, but not genius, and are not above mediocrity in learning, science, taste, or refinement. The sermons before us are marked by a certain rough energy, or a certain degree of earnestness and directness, but they indicate a sad lack of theological erudition, of varied knowledge, breadth of view, and depth of thought. They rarely if ever rise above commonplace, never go beneath the surface, are loose, vague, indefinite in expression, unpolished, and not seldom even vulgar in style, and have only a stump-orator sort of eloquence. The Beecher popularity and influence cannot then be ascribed to the personal character or qualities of the Beecher family, and can be explained only by the fact that they are in harmony with the spirit of the Evangelical world and represent its dominant tendencies.

In the Beecher family, then, we may read the inevitable course and tendency of Evangelical Protestantism, whither it is going, and in what it must end at last. The Beechers never defend a decidedly unpopular cause; they are incapable of being martyrs to either lost or incipient causes; they never join a movement till they feel that it is destined to be popular; they were never known as abolitionists till it was clear that the success of abolition was only a question of time; and we should not see Henry Ward Beecher at the head of the woman's rights movement if he did not see or believe that it has sufficient vitality to succeed without him. Yet the Beechers are shrewd, and usually keep just a step in advance of the point the public has reached to-day, but which the signs of the times assure them the public will have reached to-morrow; so that they may always appear as public leaders, and gain the credit of having declared them-

selves, before success was known. We cannot, therefore, assume that the world they appear to lead is actually up to the point where they stand, but we may feel very certain that where they stand is where the world they represent will stand to-morrow. They are a day, but only a day, ahead of their world.

The Beechers are Protestants of the Calvinistic stamp, and Calvinism, Evangelically developed, is the only living form of Protestantism. All other forms had for their organic principle the external authority of princes, have borne their fruit, died, are dead, and should be buried; but Calvinism had for its organic principle the subjective nature of man, in the emotions, sentiments, and affections of the heart, and can change as they change, and live as long as they live. This is what the Abbé Martin has in his mind when he says, "Protestantism is imperishable." Calvinism can lose the support of the civil government, all objective faith, all distinctive doctrines, and still retain its identity, its vitality, and its power of development. Indeed, it has lost all that, and yet it survives in all its strength in what is called Evangelicalism, and which is confined to no particular sect, but comprehends or accepts all that is living in any or all the sects. It is the living, active, energizing Protestantism of the day; that which inspires all the grand philanthropic, moral and social reform, missionary, educational, and the thousand-and-one other enterprises in which the Protestant world engages with so much zeal, and for which it collects and spends so many millions annually; that holds world's conventions, forms alliances of sect with sect, and leagues with socialists, revolutionists, and avowed infidels to carry on its war to the death against the church of Christ and especially against his infallible vicar. Evan-

gelicalism is bound to no creed, obliged to defend no doctrine, is sufficiently elastic to take in every heresy and to sympathize with any and every movement that is not a movement in the direction of the church of God. It is, to borrow a figure from St. Augustine, the proud and gorgeous city of the world set over against the city of God, and which it attacks by storm and siege with all the world's forces and all the world's engines of destruction. Whoso thinks it is not a formidable power, or that it can be easily vanquished, reckons without his host; only God is mightier than it, and only God can defeat it, and bring it to naught.

We do not say that Evangelicalism has yet advanced—or descended, rather—so far as to leave absolutely behind all objective doctrines; it still clings to a fading reminiscence of them, and chooses to express its subjective religion in the language of faith, to put its new wine into its old bottles, or, however the emotions, sentiments, affections, passions may change, to call them by a Christian name. In this, Beecherism humors its fancy, and lures it on in its downward career. Any one of the masculine Beechers is as little of a Christian as was Theodore Parker or Margaret Fuller, or as is Ralph Waldo Emerson or Ellingwood Abbot, John Weiss or O. B. Frothingham; but the Beecher holds from Evangelicalism, retains its spirit and much of its language, and, instead of breaking with it as the Unitarians did, he continues its legitimate development, and keeps up the family connection. He may keep just in advance of it, but he does not deviate from the line of its march. Unitarians are beginning to see their blunder, and are striving daily to repair it.

Beecherism is by no means the last word of Evangelicalism. It probably

does not itself understand that word, nor is it able to foretell what it will be. It represents the subjective or emotional side of Evangelicalism; but Evangelicalism holds from Calvinism, and Calvinism, along with its subjective principle, fully developed in the Beechers, asserts the theocratic principle—a true principle when not misapprehended or misapplied, or when represented and applied by the infallible church divinely commissioned to declare and apply the law of God, but a most dangerous, odious principle when applied by an unauthorized body, like the early Calvinists in Geneva, Scotland, and the New England colonies, as experience abundantly proves. As Calvinism develops and becomes Evangelicalism, humanity takes the place of God, and the theocratic principle becomes the anthropocratic principle, or the supremacy of humanity; and of course the absolute right of Evangelicals, philanthropists, the representatives, or those who claim to be the representatives, of humanity, to govern mankind in all things spiritual and temporal—in practice, of those who can best succeed in carrying the people with them, or those vulgarly called demagogues. Evangelicalism is developing in a humanitarian direction, affects to be democratic, and is in reality nothing but Jacobinism, socialism, Mazzinianism, with a long face, clad in a pious robe, and speaking in deep, guttural tones.

But this is not all. The Calvinistic spirit is not changed any more than the identity of Calvinism is lost by the changes in our emotional nature; by the transformation of the theocratic principle into the anthropocratic. It is always and everywhere, in religion and politics, in society and the family, the spirit of despotism. At first it said: "I represent God; do as I bid you, or die in your

rebellion against God." Now it says: "I represent humanity, and humanity is supreme; I am the people; the people are sovereign; their will is the supreme law; therefore, obey my will, or die as the enemies of humanity." Let Evangelicalism once become dominant in a republic, be the belief or spirit of the people, and it can easily and will establish the most odious civil and religious despotism, even while it imagines that it is laboring solely in the interests of humanity. It has cast off God and his law in the name of religion, reduced religion to the emotions, passions, and affections of human nature, in the name of piety. As every one of these is exclusive and despotic in its tendency, nothing is more simple than to cast off all liberty, justice, equity, in the name of God and humanity. All government holding from humanity or the people as its ultimate principle, is and must be intolerant and tyrannical with all the intolerance and despotism of human passions or sentiments. The only possible security for any kind of liberty is in the subjection of the people, collectively as well as individually—or man's emotional, affective, or passionate nature—to the law of God, the very law of liberty, because the very law of justice and equality.

We may see what Evangelicalism would do by observing what Jacobinism did in France. There it was supreme for a time, and its government is known in history as the Reign of Terror. Its spirit was, "Stranger, embrace me as your brother, or I will kill you." We see what it would do if it had full sway in what it attempts everywhere in the way of political, social, and moral reform. When it sees what it regards as an evil, public or private, it seeks by denunciation and a fanatical agitation to bring public opinion to bear against it, and then to get the legislature to pass a statute

against it and suppress it by the strong arm of power. Whatever it would suppress, it seeks to make unpopular, and then to legislate it down. It appeals to public opinion, and popularity and unpopularity are its measure of right and wrong. It hates the church, and is doing all it can to form public opinion against her by decrying and calumniating her—to form a public opinion that will, in the very name of equality, deny her equal rights with the sects—and to enact laws for the suppression of the freedom of her discipline and of her worship as fast as it can be done prudently. We see it in the Evangelical hostility to our equal rights in the public schools, and its legislation on marriage and divorce. Its acts enforcing negro equality, to legislate men into temperance, etc., are all signs of what it would do if it could. It would not legislate against the same things now or under the same pretence that Calvin did in Geneva, or our Puritan fathers did in the colonies of Massachusetts and Connecti-

cut, but it would legislate in the same spirit, and in a direction equally against all true liberty. It opposes the church because she opposes Jacobinism and exerts all her power in favor of stable government, wise and just laws; and it encourages everywhere the Jacobinical revolution, as giving it the power to suppress all liberty but its liberty to enforce, by public opinion and civil pains and penalties, its own constantly shifting notions of the public good or the interests of humanity.

The Unitarians, we have said, made a blunder in breaking with Evangelicalism. Beecherism shows them how they may repair it, and assists them to do it. Only keep clear of explicit denials, preserve a few Evangelical phrases, profess to be in earnest for "heart-religion," which means no religion at all, and peace is made, and Satan has his forces united against the Lord and his anointed, against both civil and religious liberty, and for the emancipation of society from the supremacy of the divine law.

VENITE ADOREMUS!

Dec. 25, A.C. I.

A LOWLY cave, in the hush of night,
'Neath the quiet gaze of the holy light
Of the stars, with chant of angels bright,
Welcomes Emmanuel.

Dec. 25, A.D. 1870.

A sinful heart, apart from men,
Bowed humbly down, within the ken
Of One, with sorrow's love, again
Welcomes Emmanuel.

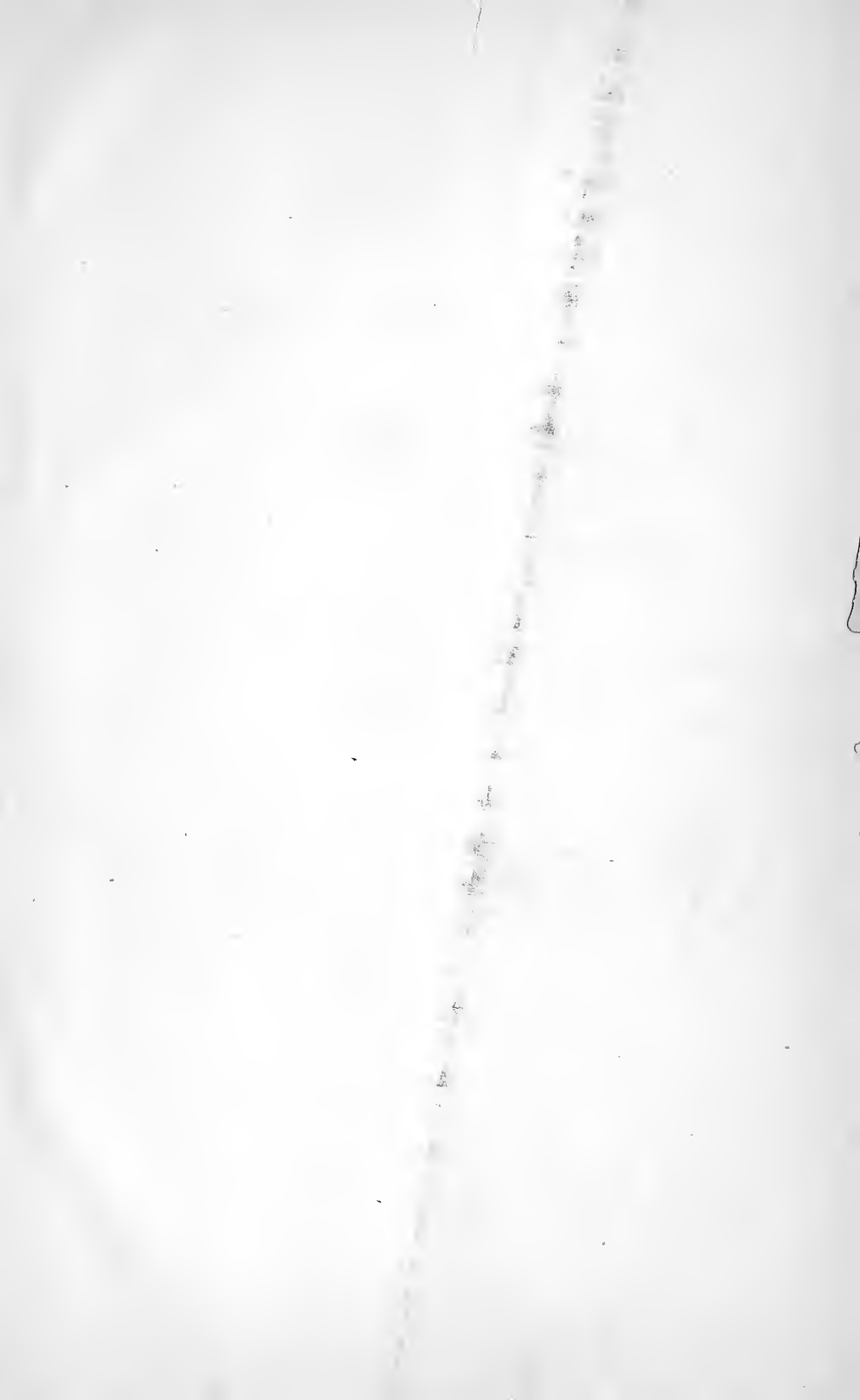
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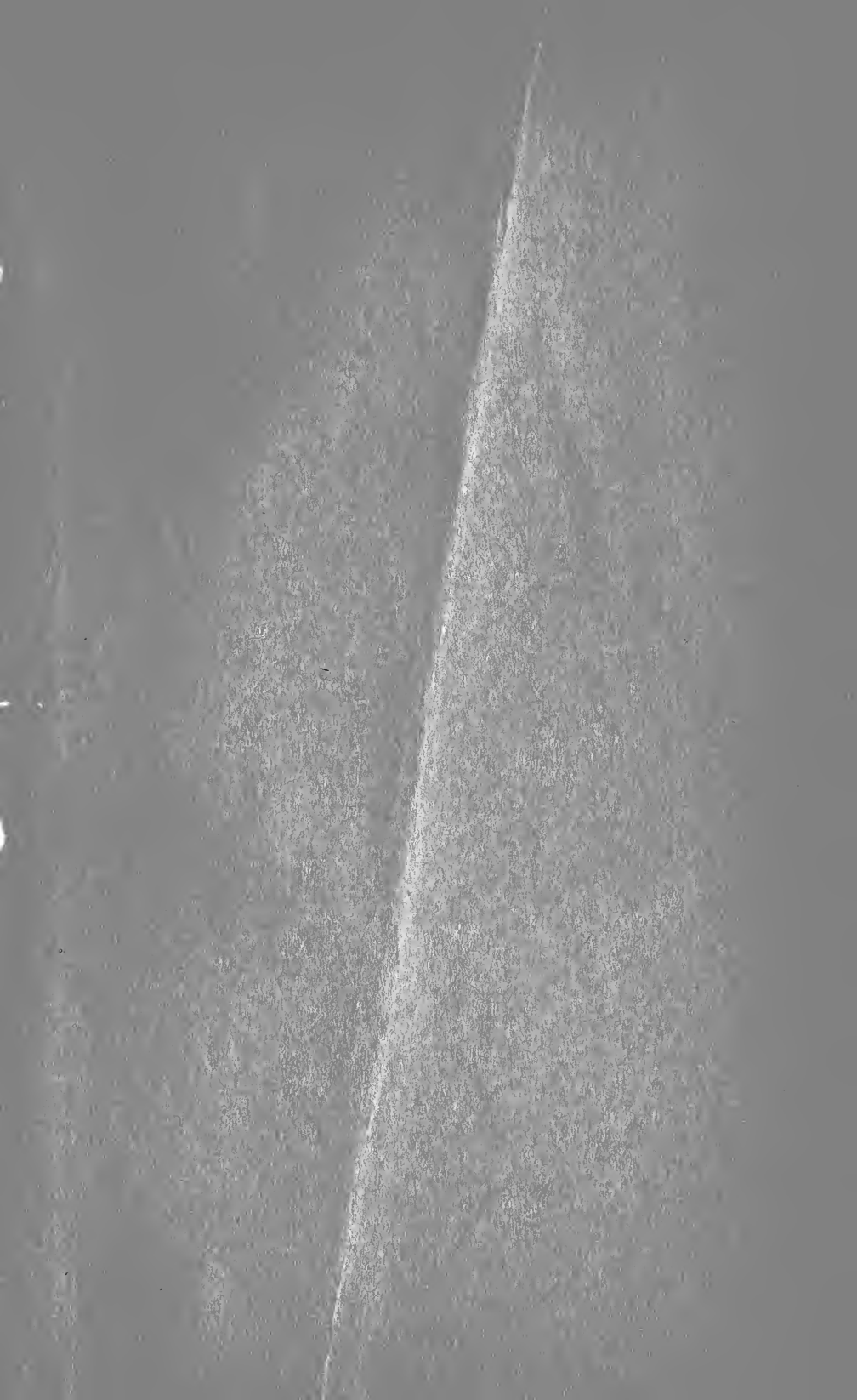
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