

THE PREACHERS OF BROOKLYN

[excerpt]

The Church in Brooklyn

Many of our readers will remember the church at the corner of Clark street and Monroe place, when it was a Universalist Church, under the ministry of one of the most active and inventive ministers ever located in Brooklyn, the Rev. Henry Blanchard, now of Indianapolis. If walls had ears, or were susceptible of theological impressions, the stones of this temple we fancy "would immediately cry out." For many years the Jesus taught within them was not God but man, and the members were knit together in sympathy with his human soul. Now He has no human soul at all, being pure and unmixed Deity. Over the canopy in the chancel, where altars usually are, are several Scripture texts and among them the profoundest which ever filled the meditative mind. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." There must be some eternal verity, our heart assures us, in a revelation capable of such opposite interpretations. "Man was made," says Saint Austin, "in the image of God; in that image in which afterwards God was made man." Orthodox says that Christ was God and man; Universalism that he was only man; Swedenborgianism that he was God-man: Man in body, God absolute in soul. Meanwhile, amid these adverse creeds, the words of John fall like the echo of some eternal strain upon the soul "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory"—a glory confessed by all of every creed. Another text stands next [to] it on this canopy, "I am the Light of the world," and as we pondered these things during the Swedenborgian service, we found contending interpretations explained by this. Whatever Christ was he dwelt among us once and is among is still. Men see His glory, and in its radiance their faces shine as the light and the raiment of mortality becomes white and glistening. He is "the Light of the world" and all its thinkers and all its systems, and whether we see Him amid the splendor of the Catholic ritual, or in the upper room at Jerusalem, in the Universalist Church as a man or in the New Church as a God, he is still amid the darkness of the moral heavens, "the bright and morning star." So, whilst the one system accuses the other of infidelity or idolatry, the soul penetrated by the words of John can both love him as a man and worship him as God.

The Swedenborgians purchased this church of the Universalists for \$40,000, and the interior has been beautified at great expense. Under the old regime the church looked cold and logical, as became the teaching within it; now it looks warm and imaginative, for a God is adored where before a man was criticized. Yet, in "the spirit they are of," the two communions are perhaps both parts of the Church Invisible—"One Fold under One Shepherd." Which shall we follow, reason or imagination? Logic is poor comfort on a death bed, but a faith so objective as Swedenborgianism is hard to bear about one in this prosaic, unimaginative world. At all events it is not given to us to "see visions and to dream dreams."

The Church was dedicated on Sunday, February 21, and so able and exhaustive a description both of the temple and the services appeared in the EAGLE of the following day, that we shall not attempt one here. Suffice it to say that on the occasion of our own visit on Sunday evening week, we were very much impressed by the vesper services, the evident culture and refinement of the worshippers, the beautiful selections of Scripture that were sung and chanted, so infinitely beyond the best of hymns, as well by the pastor of the church, the Rev. John Curtis Ager.

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