

Collection #
SC2969

HENRY WARD BEECHER MANUSCRIPT, N.D.

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Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 folder

COLLECTION
DATES: n.d.

PROVENANCE: Gallery of History, Las Vegas, NV

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE
FORMATS:

RELATED
HOLDINGS: “Seven Lectures to Young Men on Various Important
Subjects”, BJ1671.B4 1844; “Prayers from Plymouth Pulpit”,
BV250.B45 1860; “Plain and Pleasant Talk About Fruits,
Flowers, and Farming”, S407.B4 1859.

ACCESSION
NUMBER: 2006.0026

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Henry Ward Beecher (June 24, 1813—March 8, 1887) was born in Litchfield, Connecticut to Lyman Beecher, a well-known Presbyterian preacher, and Roxana Foote. Beecher was educated at the Mt. Pleasant Classical Institution in Amherst, Massachusetts, Amherst College, and finally the Lane Theological Seminary near Cincinnati, Ohio, where he graduated in 1837. Beecher's first job as a minister was in Lawrenceburg, Indiana in 1837, which is also when he married his college sweetheart, Eunice Bullard. In 1839, he was called to the pastorate of the Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, where he and his family remained until 1847. Beecher had ten children with Bullard, only four of whom survived to adulthood.

Beecher had travelled the lecture circuits while in the Midwest, and began to gain a reputation for his liberal theology and "Doctrine of Love". So much so that he gained attention back east, and was called to the pastorate of the brand new Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, New York in 1847. Beecher's dynamic and at times melodramatic preaching style drew in a crowd at Plymouth, around 2,000 official members and the pews that seated up to 3,000 were usually full. Beecher was an abolitionist and used his pulpit to decry slavery. In addition, he raised funds to send rifles "Beecher Bibles" to Kansas territory to anti-slavery resistance fighters and would hold mock "auctions" where the congregation would raise money to purchase the freedom of real slaves. Early on in the Civil War, Beecher lobbied President Lincoln to issue a proclamation to emancipate the slaves, and his congregation raised and equipped a volunteer infantry regiment.

After Civil War, he began to lend his voice to support women's suffrage, temperance, and Darwin's theory of evolution. He had also achieved enough celebrity to make a small fortune syndicating his sermons, appearing in advertisements, writing novels and pamphlets, serving as editor for *The Christian Union* and *The Independent*. Beecher also drew attention when he became embroiled in a scandal, when he was accused in 1870 of seducing Elizabeth Tilton, the pious wife of his good friend, Theodore Tilton. The scandal escalated in 1872, when Victoria Woodhull published a story about the accusations. In 1875, Theodore Tilton sued Beecher, and the trial was voraciously followed by the American press and public. In the end, the jury ruled in favor of Beecher, and the scandal did not seem to affect his career much. He still had critics, as he had all along, but he continued to fill the pews at Plymouth and remained a much sought after speaker.

Beecher died in 1887, days after suffering a stroke. In Brooklyn, a day of mourning was declared in his honor.

Sources:

"Henry Ward Beecher." Times Topics. *The New York Times*. <http://topics.nytimes.com>

"Henry Ward Beecher." Plymouth Church. http://plymouthchurch.org/our_history_henry-wardbeecher.php

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains one page, written on both sides, in which Beecher extrapolates on a Bible verse from Matthew 5:47-48. "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect." Beecher goes on to talk about how this means that Christians must always be growing and progressing, that it is the Christian duty to excel. In addition, there is a print of Beecher attached to the lower right verso page that reads, "The Last Portrait of the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher."

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CONTAINER

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC2969).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.