

holds about three hundred and fifty persons. Queen Victoria, with her accustomed gracious thoughtfulness for the enjoyments of her subjects, threw open the grounds and Palace to the public, and it is one of the treasured boons of Londoners to be able to leave the city for a space and inhale the fresh air, and the perfume of the lovely flowers of Hampton Court. Cardinal Wolsey, with all his love for pomp and magnificence, built a Palace fitting for any monarch, and never anticipated that his fickle, fitful Sovereign would deprive him of it, as of all his honours as well. Later William of Orange had it restored by that eminent architect, Sir Christopher Wren, making of it a rival of the beauties of Versailles. And so though much of the Tudor building was replaced by the more classical work of Wren, the whole is a wonderful instance of the skill with which that master mind could blend the two different styles of architecture, leaving it, in its superb surroundings, surely the most beautiful of all the Royal residences.

J. C. ROSCAMP.

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## STUDIES IN TEXTS.

Suggestions for Sermons from Current Literature.

BY THE REV. HARRINGTON C. LEES, M.A.

### XI. CHRISTIAN MERRIMENT.

*Texts.*—"The Son of Man is come eating and drinking." "This man eateth with sinners." "Let us eat and be merry." "Ye may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom." (St. Luke vii. 34; xv. 2, 23; xxii. 30.)

[Book of the Month: McLachlan's ST. LUKE\* = M. Other ref.,

Findlay's *Jesus as they knew Him*, Part II. = F. Moule's

*Ephesian Studies* = ES. Glover's *Jesus of History* = G.

Chesterton's *Charles Dickens* = C. *Christmas Books* = CB.

*Poems* = CP. Lees' *Divine Master in Home Life* = L.]

\* *St. Luke: The Man and his Work*, by H. McLachlan, M.A., B.D., Lecturer in University of Manchester, published by Longmans, Green & Co. 7s. 6d. Scholarly, thorough, sane, modern, readable, stimulating. In view of the Communion Feast, Christmas morning sermons should be brief and bright. This study is meant to be bright. Its fullness has an opportunity this year of double ministry "on the Feast of Stephen," which falls on Sunday.

Man of Sorrows opened doors of joy. The inn had no room : He offers many mansions. The anticipation of this spirit makes the "Christ-feast," i.e. "Christmas." In His pain came our peace.

" There fared a mother driven forth  
Out of an inn to roam ;  
In the place where she was homeless  
All men are at home.  
The crazy stable close at hand,  
With shaking timber and shifting sand,  
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand,  
Than the square stones of Rome." (CP. 58.)

St. Luke has given us a Gospel of joy and feasts (L. ch. xi. "Christ and our Table" for development of this theme). "Even the Lucan word for joy is characteristic. Indeed in the New Testament it is in his writings alone that we find the word *euphrosuné* (merriment) as well as the more usual words *chara* and *chairein* (joy, rejoice) : *euphrainesthai* (be merry) is more frequent with him than in all the other writings of the New Testament taken together, and various expressions of joy run through both his works. *Sunchairein* (rejoice with) is in the Gospels exclusively Lucan" (M. 146). "We can still further justify our reference to the exuberant joy characteristic of this book. Words meaning 'exult' and 'exultation' occur at i. 14, 44, 47 ; x. 21. In Luke i. 41, 44 ; vi. 23, moreover, we have 'leap' for joy, but nowhere else in the New Testament" (G. 177). And this joy is at once human, humorous, and humane. It gives us Christ's simplicity, His smile, and His sympathy.

" This day which makes us love thy light  
For ever better, that we could  
That blessed object once behold,  
Which is both the circumference  
And centre of all excellence."

(HERBERT : *The Nativity*.)

I. CHRISTMAS JOY IS HUMAN. The dictionary definition of human is "having the qualities or attributes of man." It is no ascetic Saviour whom we love. Indeed this was one of His Christian evidences. "'Merriment' (*euphrainesthai*) Luke connects almost exclusively with the partaking of food. He evidently had a feeling for the joy that springs from the common festal meal, and regarded it also in a religious light" (M. 146). Dickens has showed this to

us, and Mr. Chesterton has interpreted him : " Christmas is one of numberless old European feasts of which the essence is the combination of religion with merry-making " (C. 125). Some Christians " would pay to a Church feast every sort of compliment except feasting " (C. 124). " In fighting for Christmas Dickens was fighting for that trinity of eating, drinking, and praying which to moderns appears irreverent ; for the holy day which is really a holiday " (C. 124).

Now this is not pagan hedonism : it is Christian merry-making. Mr. Chesterton in his truthful, whimsical way says that it takes three things to make a merry Christmas—a crisis, a defiance of circumstance, and a contrast.

(a) *Joy is a State.* " Happiness is not a state ; it is a crisis. All the old customs surrounding the celebration of the birth of Christ are made by human instinct so as to insist and re-insist upon this crucial quality. Everything is so arranged that the whole household may feel, if possible, as a household does when a child is actually being born in it " (CB. x-xi).

(b) "*Christmas occurs in the Winter*" (CB. xi). Man refuses to be the slave of circumstance : and the Christ-feast encourages this spirit, its symbol is the red berries but prickly leaves of holly. " Man chooses when he wishes to be most joyful the very moment when the whole material universe is most sad " (CB. xi).

(c) *Christmas is not an Elysium of sensuous beauty* ; it is often the glorifying of what C. calls the grotesque. It is sinners not saints, ruins not triumphs, that tell the splendour of Christ. The prodigal's story is full of the word " merry." The Pharisaic elder brother is dull. " Happiness is rightly valued because it follows dramatically upon unhappiness ; happiness is valued because it is ' salvation '—something saved from the wreck " (CB. xiii). The Christmas story must have three notes, a celebration, in gold type, a campaign, in black type, a rescue, in red type. St. Stephen is crowned though stoned, St. John is conquering though exiled, the Infant Christ will ultimately rescue the Innocents.

II. THE CHRISTMAS JOY IS HUMOROUS. That is " the mental quality which tends to excite laughter : playfulness." We see all this in Christmas, St. Luke, and Christ. " In truth it may be said that humour shines in the face of Luke, whether we regard him as Physician, Painter, or Historian. This is not to credit the Evange-

list with a quick wit and lively fancy. Humour is no surface quality of the mind. It springs from a deep source, and pervades the whole being" (M. 144). Christ's sympathy "contained as a seed the flower, the saving grace of humour, which only needed soil and sun to bear in due season bright laughter as it were a bloom" (M. 145). "The writers of the Gospels do not conceal that Jesus had feelings, and expressed them" (G. 50).

" In this alone He differed from the rest,  
That, though He joined with glee in all that passed,  
His mind was ever stainless as the snow,  
And no foul thought could find a lodging there."

(JOHN OXENHAM : *Gentlemen, the King !*)

"Pharisees, like the elder brother in the parable, disapprove of noisy hilarity in religion; Luke is our principal witness to the fact that Jesus not only tolerates the gaiety of simple souls who laugh, dance, and sing boisterously when they are happy, but joins in, with a disregard of dignity which reflects the merry heart of God" (F. 179). "It is only familiarity that has blinded us to the 'charm' men found in His speech—they marvelled at His words of charm—to the gaiety and playfulness that light up His lessons" (G. 48). And in the sanctifying of merriment came one of the greatest of Christian victories. St. Paul found it needful to warn the early Church of the nasty joke, in Ephesians v. 4, "ribaldry and innuendo" (Way); "foolish talk and low jesting" (Weymouth); "*nor fool-talk*, the horrible trifling and soulless 'frankness' over what is bad . . . *nor jesting*, the wretched pleasantry, as different as possible from the play of pure and wholesome mirth" (ES. 248).

III. THE CHRISTMAS JOY IS HUMANE. That is, "having tenderness, and a disposition to treat other beings with kindness." It cannot neglect others through selfish absorption in its own pleasure. Christmas brings in lonely and neglected to share the carols and the turkey. Dives, who entertained his brothers, even though a worldly man "succeeds in being 'merry and bright'—an almost literal translation of xvi. 19 . . . but the rich fool (who sits alone) can only 'try to be merry'—we may render the delicate change of tense in xii. 19" (F. 178). "The joy of the common meal springs largely from the light-heartedness and good-humour of the participants. Luke's own contributions doubtless lighted up the faces of his friends, so that he came to think of the meal as a joyous festival" (M. 146).

It is a subtle saying, "Dickens was always kind-hearted, he was not always good-humoured" (C. 43). "We have in this Gospel the true doctrine of Christian revelry" (F. 179). "The 'Shepherd rejoices' over the sheep, the 'woman' over her recovered coin, but actual merriment or *home-joy* comes in along the less brightly coloured word only when a lost son is concerned. There is, too, a rising note—'joy in heaven' (v. 7), 'joy in the presence of the angels'—a reverent Jewish way of saying 'in God's heart'" (F. 178).

Christmas is the time of reconciliation. Let us try. "There is a little-noticed phrase, that grows very delightful as we study it, in His words to the seventy disciples—'Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace to this house (the common *salaam* of the East); and if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, your *salaam* will come back to you' (Luke x. 6). 'A son of peace'—not *the* son of peace—what a beautiful expression: what a beautiful idea, too, that the unheeded *Peace!* comes back and blesses the heart that wished it, as if courteous and kind words never went unrewarded!" (G. 48).

So Christmas looks on to the final feast of the united family of God,

"To an open house in the evening  
Home shall all men come.  
To an older place than Eden  
And a taller town than Rome.  
To the end of the way of the wandering star,  
To the things that cannot be and that are,  
To the place where God was homeless  
And all men are at home."

(G. K. CHESTERTON.)

