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A HOLY AND HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

Glory fills the skies,
While the world is sleeping,
Angels' starry eyes
Watch and ward are keeping.
Hark! good-will and peace,
Angel tongues are singing,
Songs that never cease
O'er the earth are ringing
Lo! the rising star
Yonder skies adorning
Soft and bright afar
Breaketh Christmas morning!

THE JOYFUL SEASON.

CHRISTMAS-TIDE has been called "the Joyful Season"; and no doubt there is greater cheer and good-will among men during that period than at any other period of the year. Would that this feeling were everywhere caused by a real sense of the priceless blessings of redemption. There are devout people whose hearts are touched by the wondrous love manifested to men in the event which Christmas celebrates, but, alas, how comparatively few regard Christmas as a season for religious duty and acknowledgment. We are well aware of the fact that the date of Christ's birth is not known and that the 25th of December has been appointed merely as a convenient time for the observing of the festival, yet, since that date has been so widely accepted, and since the avowed object of the celebration is to commemorate the birth of the Saviour, the observance thereof ought to be in the proper spirit; and if the Church cannot recognize Christmas as a Church festival it is surely meet that Presbyterians who observe the day should seek to do so in a manner consistent with the professed object of Christmas. How Christmas was regarded by the fathers last century is set forth in the following interesting passage:

"In the early Church, in the time of the holy Apostles and their pious followers, more pains were taken to keep in mind the crucified and risen Jesus, than to increase the number of public festivals. More attention was given to a righteous life in Christ, to the sincere heart-knowledge of the Saviour, to His spiritual birth by grace in the soul of the believer, to the power of His resurrection manifesting itself within, to the fellowship of His sufferings and death, than to a nice and inquisitive determination of the year and day in which the Sun of Righteousness began to send abroad His beams of blessing and of salvation. Had the

Apostles or their immediate followers had as much curiosity in these things as learned men in the Church since have manifested (whose differences even to the present day are sufficiently known), they might have saved these latter much time, trouble, and racking of brains. But since those holy men were not minded to leave us anything on this point, it is probable that the uncertainty in which the learned yet grope will continue until the Lord Himself shall come, when neither Supper of Remembrance nor Day of Remembrance will be needed, but the Lord Himself and His heavenly light will be to His elect all in all."

Rev. Dr. Smith gives the following brief account of the introduction of Christmas: "The old heathen feast of Saturn began on the twenty-fifth of December. The Church could not uproot it; it transformed it. And the transition was not difficult. The Saturnalia were the days of the returning sun. The winter Solstice was passed, and in the just noticeable increase in the height of the sun in the heavens, was the promise of a new year. The sun was one of the earliest deities, and one almost universally worshipped. In primitive times he was regarded as a living person. His retreat to the south was interpreted as a threat. It seemed as if he were going to leave his dependents to the cold and to the darkness. Hence the joy with which his return was hailed, a joy rising to delirium and manifesting itself often in the wildest excesses. But the Christian's Sun is Jesus. He is the Source for light. What more fitting than that His advent should be celebrated on the Day of the Return of the Sun? It can hardly be doubted that this was the line of reasoning on which Pope Liberius proceeded when he introduced Christmas to take the place of the Saturnalia. And it is not unlikely that the Egyptian Gnostics, as well as the Egyptian Christians, were influenced by similar arguments. The Egyptian feasts are, to be sure, not so well-known to us as those of the Romans. But it has been pointed out that in an old Roman calendar the sixth of January is named the Egyptian Day, not unlike their great festival. And it is conceded that the feast of Osiris (one form of the sun god) fell during the ten days ending on January 7th. We shall hardly be wrong in assuming that one of these days was chosen as the Christ festival for the same reason which influenced Pope Liberius a hundred and fifty years later. The Birthday of the Unconquered, as the heathen Romans named the twenty-fifth of December, might be fixed on a little different date in Egypt. But the Gnostics, which had no scruple in applying to Christ many of the names and attributes of the Egyptian Sun-God, would be strongly moved to make the birthday of one the birthday of the other."

The feature most noticeable in connection with Christmas is the giving of presents, and the interchange of tokens of good-will. The verse reads, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

Christ the greatest of all gifts is given freely, and His love inspires kindness, tenderness and liberality.