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The Evangelical Churchman

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A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Hark! the merry bells of Christmas
 Blithely ring their joyous chime,
 Laden with the precious memories
 Of the blessed olden time.

Ringing joyous, joyous ringing,
 Chorus sweet to angels singing,
 Singing of the Saviour's story,
 Chanting e'er His wondrous story.

Listen to that wondrous story,
 Which the music of the bells,
 Sounding clear, o'er hill and valley,
 To our hearts so sweetly tells.

Ringing joyous, joyous ringing, etc.

How the Saviour, King Eternal,
 Left His throne to dwell on earth,
 And the First great Christmas morning,
 Hailed His lowly humble birth.

Ringing joyous, joyous ringing, etc.

How His birthplace was a stable,
 In a manger He was laid,
 How the wise men paid their homage,
 And the star His will obeyed.

Ringing joyous, joyous ringing, etc.

How by night the shepherds watching,
 Anxious lest their flocks should stray,
 Saw a glory shine around them,
 Brighter than the light of day.

Ringing joyous, joyous ringing, etc.

How they listened to the tidings,
 Saint expected, prophet knew,
 How their fear became rejoicing,
 When they found the message true.

Ringing joyous, joyous ringing, etc.

How the angels sang His birth-song,
 Never sung so sweet as then:
 "To God be glory in the highest,
 Peace on earth, good will to men."

Ringing joyous, joyous ringing, etc.

How He triumphed over Satan,
 Hell in fetters captive led,
 Forced the grave to own His power,
 Rose victorious from the dead.

Ringing joyous, joyous ringing, etc.

Still for sinners He is pleading,
 And the music of the bells,
 Of the blessings Jesus won us,
 Of His love, and mercy, tells.

Ringing joyous, joyous ringing,
 Chorus sweet to angels singing,
 Singing of the Saviour's glory,
 Chanting e'er His wondrous story.

GOOD TIDINGS—OF GREAT JOY—TO ALL PEOPLE.

BY C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D., MASTER OF THE TEMPLE.

"Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."—
 Luke ii. 10.

The word "joy" fills a large place in scripture. A far larger place than it occupies in the ordinary Christian life. In some respects, a place not only unexpected and astonishing, but even paradoxical: for, of all emotions, joy is the most spontaneous, the least responsive to command, the furthest removed from the region of bidding and forbidding; yet, in Scripture, we find it not only as a promise but as a precept—a precept imperative, unconditional, and oft-repeated: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice."

Joy is the overflow of happiness. In any other form it is hollow and hypocritical. The mirth of fools is no joy; more often it is the mask of misery: trace it to its source, and you will often find it a mere explosion of irritation and anger against a yoke of fear and remorse which the soul is powerless to shake off. Such joy is no duty; it is the deposition of an evil conscience against itself: the joy of the world, like "the sorrow of the world," "worketh death."

Before joy, in the Christian sense, there must be happiness. That peace which passeth understanding, of which the foundations are laid in reconciliation with God, must first have possession—must "keep the hearts and thoughts," as St. Paul writes, "in Christ Jesus"—and then the happiness will sparkle into joy, at the mere touch of the same inspiring word which said to the Creation, "Let there be light," and which said again in the regeneration, "Let the true light now shine!"

"Good tidings of great joy."
 The messenger was an Angel; and the message was, a Birth.

Great joy, to a fallen being, can only come in the form of tidings—tidings from heaven. Earth is dark with sin and woe: the shadow of death lies heavily upon the individual life: the soul has little to say why it should not die, or worse than die, with the body: the will is in bondage, and, if it were free, could not rise above duty—could make no reparation to broken laws, could frame to itself no ambition of a spiritual life, no ideal of a super-human, a God-like existence—much less, really live

it: so that the very conception of happiness—and still more of joy, which is the ebullition and exhilaration of happiness—is out of the reach and beyond the horizon of the sinner, unless God shall say to him some entirely new thing which shall lift his whole life into a world which eye hath not seen, nor imagination pictured, without it.

"Revelation," in the strict sense of that word—the stripping of the veil off the invisible—the removal of a cloud which hides the tops of the holy hills—the lifting up, by a ray from "the excellent glory," of those realities which form the heaven and presence-chamber of God Himself—is the one hope, for all that concerns happiness, of the creature that has sinned, of the creature that lies under or dwells amidst suffering, of the creature that must soon go hence and that knows not whither.

"Tidings," then—tidings from the maker of all things, from the Judge of all men. But what tidings? A new law? a new revelation of duty—clearer, perhaps, more express, more imperative, than the former—fenced with stronger sanctions of promise and threatening than those before which men feared and quaked at Sinai, or which already had their worse terrors in the handwriting of the conscience? Or, a new Gospel? of a life after death, reserved in heaven for such as shall have fought successfully against sin, the world, and the devil, and earned for themselves a good reward in the achievements of a well spent life? Shall either of these be the shape and form of the new "tidings" from the throne of God in heaven? Hath either of these the reassuring, reviving voice which shall make it, for man such as he is, the "good tidings" which shall first communicate happiness, and then brighten and kindle up that happiness into a "great joy?"

The question asked of us Christians, is its own reply. The message is a Birth. "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

At this one season in the year we fasten our thoughts upon the Revelation of God in the Gospel in its most distinctive, most comprehensive, and most attractive aspect.

The Gospel is, a Divine Incarnation. It is the announcement that God the Creator, who was outside the work of His own hands, has come into that work, by a true and real incorporation, in the Person of the Eternal Word, that He might be one with us in our life with all its trials, and in our death with all its pains. It is the announcement that something, we are scarcely told what it was, which stood between us and Him by reason of sin—that something that hindered love itself from coming forth as it would towards the guilty and sin-laden—is now removed and rolled away, not by us, but for us, through the death of One, both God and Man, who was born (as at this time) on purpose that He might die, and by dying might open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. This great mystery—I had almost called it this one mystery—is the tidings of great joy. Believe it, and you have life. Believe it, and you will find it, for all practical purposes, self-evidencing and self-explaining. "He that believeth on the Son of God," St. John says, "hath the witness in himself"—so satisfactory, so harmonious, so true to the realities of the whole being, to the instinctive longings, to the primal ideas, to the conscientious promptings, of the man himself, is the revelation, when once it is grasped and lived by, of God made man, of the Father manifested in the Son, of the Light coming

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