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G. K. Chesterton — Troubadour of Christmas

Late contains a train to be a contained to the state of t

BY REV. JOHN D. BOYD, BJ.

VERYTHING SHARE SHARE Ches ferion was large. His bear of huge proportions was best a shadowy index to his great soul lik zenius made him a literary chant that promises to treer over our dwarfed works for many a year to come. Such that he said of his greatman filt ene thing, it seems, is cardinal. Chesterion was primarily and always poet and will best be repembered for his operation society in the operation of the periodical sections that the periodical sections there works of

human insights that opened such here worlds of realist for to his renders. We realist realist that instinctive ridicule of supenics, vegetarianum and prohibition, and his deadly accurate and hearty grasp of St. Thomas' personnial philosophy. Bu erond those pleasment appreciations and really the source of their believes and clarity was his vest-and intensely human, sacramental intuition of Christianity, that made him a Catholic yours before his ecoveration. To Chemierion out universe from its instructi

east down to "the ameli apples that grow he a element reality, much too worthwhile ever to set weed to. There is a shock of wonder about every thing and this wonder in accommental, for our trainways is a statement, a tell-fully regulary, a great analogy of being where God and His ere-ation less hands. At every turn in the road we find like footprints:

Did not a greet grey surrent Of all my street und me. Build this portion of the pines, And heed the fattle and till the rimes, And labor and pass and leave no signs have morey and my stery?

For man, the ownter of this universe, illes a quest of God. This quest will so steep him. In support that his very bettefaction will be the morature of his further quest, will 1 also of miles a pluming "somestick in his house and a similar grow under the pan." But a man must be a Chilatian man, the Meed-fronty of Christ, the Collegen, whose Page is to him. "a wandering home, a Kying home"; who to the wayfare is the Sacrament of marraments; the Way! The high advent ultimate in man's surgo through our universe time of the incornation. this new, more influence, of musicay, up and beyond, through the realms more open yet more mysterious hiding of the of falls, home to the arms of God. Theologians great dray servant, is certainly something worth speak of the humanizing qualities of Grace, how

the locuration. But his intuition of Christianity The poem begins, as, one might expect of him. Sade more aspecial focus and point in his Christianity with a simple fact learned from St. Luket "There had more aspecial focus and point in his Christianity with a simple fact learned from St. Luket "There had more than the laws and forms." none poetry properly so-called. The popular was no toom for them in the inn"; and imme-"Christman Carol" is a resister example of his distely we are shown the farreaching sacra-Christeins Carol. he a resistory example of his discely we are shown the farreaching, eacrapenden in helion. His apprehension of the simple
Merital implications of this fact.

Nativity mone at Mother and Child Reseauches
of its simplicity in being at the mann limit a point.

Out of an inni is reason:

In the place where the was homeless
them. The manne is the shawer to the
sides of the ages. In the Child whose hair

In the place where the was homeless
than a light a war, a fire and a crown we
leave the Creater and Lard of the universe, the more the Creatur and Lord of the universe, the

The Christ-child fay on Mary's hours, Min hair was like a fire. (O marry, water in the world, But here the world's dealer.) The Christ-child aloud at Mary's knot, His hair was like a stown, And all the flowers looked use at Hart And all the store booked down.

In "The Issues of Christman," perliapse his best Christmas posts. Chesterton again captures the living homesickness. It traces it to its source and ale a plenty, tricks and prants and merrispirit of the least and its transcendent implication and analysis and as Adam. In him we ment, are the tell tale mysteries of our home in these in the simple, most human of images, the all tost our hearts come ago in that dateless, unone most fraught with associations of warmels classed fraught with associations of warmels classed garden:

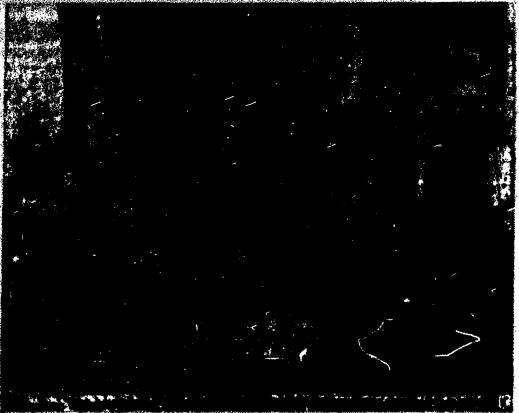
the interpolates of tanglots carrier correspond to the paper home. To create the correspond to the paper home. To create the corresponding to the paper home. The corresponding the paper home. The corresponding the paper home. The corresponding to the correspo we really test at home. Augustine hore witnesses to this hunger of heart and there is none of the that cannot say amen? The Incanate God exiter cannot say amen? The Incanate God exiter is to us the picke and part-payment.

of our ultimate homo-coming. For their are homeslek to their homes, tor men are nomenes in mere nomes, And strangers under the aug.
And they me their heads in a foreign land.
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have built and blading eyes.
And chases and honor and high surprise.
But our hones are under mirroulous skin.
These the write tale took because

Where the Jule tale was begun. Chesierton's selection of the image of "home" the profound theology of the incarnation and its livered and thundered unthinkable wings the profound theology of the incarnation and its livered and incredible star.

The profound theology of the incarnation and its livered an incredible star.

The profound theology of the incarnation and its livered an incredible star.



Mankenevel from wood, drouged in real brounden, silk, and linen, and secreed with jevels, these mine figures, in to 20 inches high, represent the Holy Family, the Magi and shepherds. This very striking Creeks is a revival of 18th Century New politics cribs. Two Politic women of Washington, ifeta of the mural artist John Delkusas, and survivors of both the Polish and the Lordon bills during the war, specialise in making these individually nations cribs. Miss Suphic Duckeses enriced and painted the stimulies and her slater. Mrs. Marchiel, designed the historically acourage continues. (NCWC)

lound a hoose. The Banctifying Grace we had lost and which He came to win back for us, is also our home, a real share in the home life of the flodhead. By it the Blessed Trinky dwells "the wandering home, the flying home" of the nilwrim. But our final and best homecoming, when death opens the door to life, when Grace haven into Clory, will bring us to our Father's floure, at home in His eternal embrace. This is

the pregnancy of the image of "home" as it, develops through the poem. It brings us to the singing about all one's life and this the trouble only by divinited by its life do we become per-deux Chest-rion rejoiced as a giant in coing. I leadly human, Here, indeed, is a profound mys-in and sense, then, Chesterion's writing was lery and here is the profound and full meaning one year Christman hymn, one grand thank to of "home" to Chesterton.

restoring King of need It is Christman in and lifer of our finding our home with him. This server in the starts and in the steelts of men: Divise humility is another token "of the mercy and mystery" that signs all God's dealings with men. a reinlinder of our helplessness apart from lifes and to all who will accept his challenge a pledge of security stronger by far than the stout-cat bastions of this world.

The cracy stable close at hand, With a shaking timber and shifting and, Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand Than the square stones of Rome.

The poem proceeds developing this theme of

Though our hands fashion and our heads though the have on earth sceningly endices adventure and wonder, we have not here a lasting city. These things are not enough. Our peace is far out beyond the realm of our universe, beyond the farthest star, whither the mystery of Beiltlehem inevitably draws us: to the shaking slible more strong than the stones of Rome.

This world is an wild as an old wives' tale. And strange the plain things are. The carth is enough and the air is clough for our nonder and our war: But the rist is as far as the firedrake swings

And our peace is put in impossible things

Son of God, becoming man, assumed a human and our war, we are drawn ever onward by the nature and pitched His levil has the Greek of Christmas trumpots from the hills of home. In a 2t, John his it is our midst like drop all of us hist, sweeping ablest the great-souled Chesterton to Himself as brothers and allers. In Him we casts up before us his panorsms of our spie home. Resignate Holy Land the Middle East and correspond-

coming at the end of time, to the "inm at the end of the world," "the decent into of death." To him the English inn was really home on a larger scale; small enough to be homey and large enough In our souls and we make our home with God. to house all men. With the martial shout of symphonic resolution the poem erads:

> To an open house in the evening. Home shall men come, To an older place than Eden And a taller town than Rome. To the cuit of the way of the yemndering star, To the things that cannot be amd are, To the piace where God was homseless

> And all men are at home.

Homeless God brings all men home, the yule tale has a happy ending, God has vindicated the naradox of Bethlehem for all who were big enough to accept its challenger, the quest through mystery now finds Vision, the Grace flares into Glory. The crazy stable is "the many mainslens" and all

Chestorion has gone home. His is indeed a merry Christmas. But for us wiso still journey he has a few healthy suggestions on how to spend our intervening Christmases, in his "Charles Dickens" he tells us:

"Chistmas is one of those old Entropean feasts of which the essence is a combination of religion and merrymaking. In fighting for Christmas Dickens was fighting for that trigally of eating, irreverent, for the holy day which is really a holiday."

Though we are homesick pilgrizms our pattern should not be the Puritan but rather the Canterbury variety. We should enjoy our pilgrimage. . . . it is only Christian smen

Guard oven heathen things. Our God has blessed cression

Calling it good . . .

ment, are the tell tale mysteries of our home in God Laughter and merriment have a special place in the Christman house for Chesterton because they are very human institutions and are the badge of every true Christian to certify his humility. A man, to be a man at all, must laugh at himself and recognize his own insdequacy in the face of the great mystery of life that is his lot. But Christian laughter, unlike that of the scentic. "ends not in scorning"; it is only another aspect of our quest for God in mystery.

This Chestertonian philosophy of laughter appears in a brilliant passage in his "Ballad of the White Horse." Alfred the King has just been struck and scarred by a servant woman. His armies assembling from all sides to do battle with the Danes remind him of his power. He could smite and kill her for such insolence. But instead we read that "squirrels stirred in their dusty dreams and startled birds went up in streams for the laughter of the king." And the beasts of the earth and the birds tooked

doive, In a wild solemnity. On a stranger eight than a sylph or elf, Of our man laughing at himself

Then follow two masterful stanzas in rich com-

mentary on Christian laughter, which is really

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That rours through a thousand telen,

Christmas laughter for it is all bound up in

Christmas humility. The ginet laughter of Circuitan me Where greed in an ape and pride is an asa, And Inck's away with the master's last, And the miser is banged with all his brane, And the farmer with all his falls; Tules that tumble and tales that trick Yet and not all in accorning-

Of kings and clowns in a merry plight, Of the clocks goto wrong and the world got Under the greenwood tree-

right, That reummers sing upon Christman night And Christmas day in the morning.

That the Incarnation and Christmas were meant to make men more juman is also clearly reflected in two other poeds on Christmas: "A Song of the Gifts to God" and "A Christmas Song for the Three Guilds." The first of these is something of a lament wherein the three Wise Men. representing differing viewpoints of men of all time, discuss their gifts. The first sees merely a child in a cold stable who will be capable of no more than cold gratitude. The second says: no, this Child is God. However, God can scarcely want my gold: He holds the gold heart of the sun. But the third, the wisest of them all, sees through the mystery of Christmas giving to God. It is not to enrich God but ourselves that we give. Dedication of our world is the only straight use of our world. It is the same idea again of our belongingness to God, our quest of Him. Babe of a thousand birthdays, we that are young

yet gray, While with the centuries, can find no better things to my,

We that with sects and whime and wars have wested Christmas day. Light Thou Thy censer to Thyself, for all our

Ares are dina, Stamp Thou Thine image on our coins, for Caesar's face grown grim, And a dumb devil of pride and greed has taken

bold of him. We bring Thee back great Christendom, cisurches and towns and towers. And if our hearts are glad, O God, to cast them down like flowers,

Tis not that they carich Thise hands, but they are saved from ours.

The guild song is more exultant, a slashing vindication of human liberty, most apt for Christmas day. St. Joseph tells his carpenters, St. Crispin his shoemakers and St. Luke his painters to serve humanity each in their own way, humbly spreading the good things of life.

Let all your thoughts be soft and white as the wood of the white tree.

. . Let your own feet be shed with peace, be lowly all your lives. . Paint mighty things, paint pairry things. paint silly things or sweet . . .

But if men encroach on liberty, if they tear the human Charter, then off to a Crusade! Then in unison the three saints quote God, the Master Craftsman.

Almighty God to all mankind on Christmas days said He: I rent you from the old red bills and, rending

made you free. There was Charter, there was challenge; in a

You can be all things other; you cannot be a slave. You shall be tired and telerant of fancies as

they fade, But if men doubt the Charter, ye shall call on the Crusade

Trumpet and torch and catapult, cannon and bow and blade,

Recause it was My challenge to all things I

It would be outte inadequate to think of Cheserton's Christmas poetry and not mention our Lady. But Her spirit is so all-pervading in Chesterton's world, one knows not where to begin Like wisdom described in the Old Testament and apprepriated to Her in our Marian liturgy. She permeates our life, goes on before us "through our silent earthquake lands," the Mother of our pilgrimage through mystery. The simple Maid, who in mothering God has mothered all of us. is a Queen of Seven Swords. She has smitten the world to Wisdom but Wisdom is wrapped in mystery, in the Flesh she spur for Him. This is the thunderous affirmation of all Christian centuries and touchstone of their faith, just as it is the shattering enigms to sceptics whose minds are little and dark. This is the simple Maid of the "Christmas Carol" and "The House" of Christmas," the Queen in "The Ballad of the White Horse" who says:

The gates of heaven are lightly locked, We do not guard our gain, The heaviest hind may easily Come silently and suddenly Upon me in a lene.

And any little maid that walks In good thoughts apart, May break the guard of the Three Kings And see the dear said dreadful things

I hid within my heart.

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