

sign their treaties with blood drawn from their own veins. Even in modern times, when the Scottish peasants and nobles desired to express their adhesion to the Solemn League and Covenant, they, in some instances, wrote their names with their blood. There are also examples of conspirators binding themselves together by the practice of drinking a cup filled with human blood, as the most solemn mode of testifying their adhesion to each other. There is again the expression and the image familiar to all of us, of the soldier, the martyr, the patriot, shedding his blood for the good of his country, his cause, his religion. From the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias who was slain between the temple and the altar, from the blood of Zacharias to the last Turkish soldier who shed his blood under the walls of Plevna in behalf of the Sultan, it is the supreme offering which any human being can make to loyalty, to duty, to faith. And of all these examples of the sacrifice of life, of the shedding of blood, the most sacred, the most efficacious is that which was offered and shed on Calvary, because it was the offering

made not for war or aggression, but for peace and reconciliation; not in hatred, but in love; not by a feeble, erring, ordinary mortal, but by Him who is by all of us acknowledged to be the Ideal of man and the Likeness of God. It is therefore this final and supreme test of our love and loyalty that the cup of the Eucharist suggests—our willingness, if so be, to sacrifice our own selves, to shed our own blood for what we believe to be right and true and for the good of others.—A. P. Stanley: *Nineteenth Century*.

“*Till He come.*” There are two feelings which belong to this supper—abasement and triumph; abasement, because everything that tells of Christ’s sacrifice reminds us of human guilt; and triumph, because the idea of His coming again, “without sin unto salvation,” is full of highest rapture. These two feelings are intended to go hand in hand through life, for that sadness which has not in it a sense of triumph is not Christian, but morbid; neither is that joy Christian which is without some sense of sorrow.—F. W. Robertson.

## The Humour of our Lord.

### PART I.

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I CAN very well conceive that on the first blush the heading of the present short Paper may startle and even “offend.” I should not willingly or lightly incur THE MASTER’S “woe” by so offending the least or humblest fellow-Christian. It must be permitted me, therefore, in the outset, to safeguard myself from misunderstanding by two preliminary remarks:—

(a) *God and not the Evil One made humour.* So that in regard to it, I have been accustomed to answer objections much as I have done objections to Christians wearing jewels and gold and other adornments—viz. that God, by providing these, shows He meant them to be worn. Similarly, it is profoundly irreligious to discredit humour that by the Divine bestowment of it—on at once the loftiest and deepest natures of our kind—is demonstrated to have been intended to be used. Hence Sydney Smith’s repartee to the pseudo-solemn clergyman who reprimanded him for the indulgence (as he phrased it) of his wit, was as devout as it was brilliant: “Now, sir, suppose—though I grant it to be a prodigious supposition in your case—Almighty God had given you WIT instead of withholding it from you, what would you have done with it?” It is God’s gift; and humour is the sublimation of wit.

(b) *The absence of humour in a recognised great man is held to be a defect.*—Take Shakespeare over-against such mighties as earlier Bacon and Milton, and later Wordsworth and Shelley. How does he tower “head and shoulders” taller than they? And why? Mainly through the presence—like an interpenetrative salt, or shall I say informing perfume?—of this subtle yet most human element, or quality, or faculty, or whatever it may be designated. Not only does Shakespeare by this supreme

power win our personal love as “gentle Shakespeare,”—the almost invariable epithet applied to him by his contemporaries,—but by it he is differentiated from all other simply human intellects. By the combination of the most ultimate genius with the other, our “all-prevailing poet” stands out distinctively above all comparison. What were the depths of ocean without the flash and play and iridescence of its foam?

This being so (*meo judicio*), it is to derogate from the humanness and the perfected greatness of our Lord to shrink from interrogating certain acts and utterances of His, in order to ascertain whether or no the “Man Christ Jesus” was not endowed with a quality that must be conceded as having been a characteristic of the largest, roomiest, and grandest of the sons of men, headed by Shakespeare (as we have seen), and followed by Cervantes, Sterne, Charles Lamb, Charles Dickens, Thackeray, Jean Paul Richter, *et hoc genus omne*; and, specially, by the foremost preachers of all time—e.g., from Donne and Thomas Adams to Fuller and South, and modernly from Thomas Chalmers and Thomas Guthrie to Ward Beecher and Charles Spurgeon. In this connection, before passing forward, I fetch confirmation from a master’s word-portraiture of perhaps the most John the Baptist-like minister of the gospel Scotland has ever seen—Dr. William Anderson, of Glasgow—as thus: “There was great power of pathos in him as well as of wrath, and he could make his hearers melt to tears as they had trembled with him in his anger. It became evident, indeed, as he passed to this side, that his indignation, in its fiercest vehemence, was compassion set on fire. *Like most men who draw love to themselves,*

he had a vein of very true and deep humour, which could rise in its turn to scathing sarcasm, and which expressed itself not less in the shifting light of eye and face" (Dr. John Ker, Introductory Sketch to *Regeneration*, 1875).

All this being so, I have not, for my own part, a shadow of hesitation in dealing with our subject. It may seem superfluous to affirm our uttermost reverence toward our Lord in this and every inquiry concerning Him. I seek to be excused by my earnest desire to take heed to the Apostle's monition, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling" (Rom. xiv. 13).

And now I know not that I can better put the matter than by going to *L'Antechrist* of Renan. Therein (p. 101) he describes the Book of *Ecclesiastes* as a "livre charmant, le seul livre aimable qui ait été composé par un Juif;" and adds (p. 102), "Nous ne comprenons pas le galant homme sans un peu de scepticisme; nous aimons que l'homme vertueux dise de temps à autre, *Vertu, tu n'es qu'un mot.*" He goes on to say that the power of smiling at one's own work is "la qualité essentielle d'une personne distinguée," and maintains that this quality was strikingly exemplified in Christ.

The disappointment is that Renan contents himself with the enunciation of what he is too acute not to know could not fail to be regarded as a paradox, and so calling for full proof. The Hon. Lionel A. Tollemache is therefore justified, in his remarkable *Recollections of Pattison*, as reprinted from the *Journal of Education* of June 1885 in his *Stones of Stumbling* (1887), in his request, as follows:—

"I wish that some readers would inform me what saying or sayings of Christ Renan could possibly have had in his mind when he made this startling assertion (p. 183)."

Perhaps my Paper will go so far on the way of an answer, as perhaps also our introductory observations may modify the alleged "startling" characters of Renan's assertion. It is noteworthy that it should have proved "startling" to so bold and uncompromising an inquirer as the author of *Stones of Stumbling and Safe Studies*.

I propose to limit myself substantively, in the present Paper, to a single exemplification of the Humour of our Lord, touching on others merely. But I propose in a second Paper to demonstrate the presence of the same element of Humour throughout the Sayings and word-portraits of our Lord. The example I mean is found in the Gospel of St. Matthew xi. 16-19, and St. Luke vii. 31-35. There are certain *nuances* and exquisite touches that evaporate in all translations, and therefore it is deemed expedient to give here the original:—

1. "Τίνι δὲ ὁμοιώσω τὴν γενεὴν ταύτην; ὁμοία ἐστὶ παιδαρίους ἐν ἀγοραῖς καθημένους, καὶ προσφωνοῦσι

τοῖς ἐταίροις αὐτῶν καὶ λέγουσιν, Ἠλλήσαμεν ὑμῶν, καὶ οὐκ ὠρχήσασθε· ἐθρηνησαμεν ὑμῶν, καὶ οὐκ ἐκόψασθε. Ἦλθε γὰρ Ἰωάννης μῆτε ἐσθίων μῆτε πίνων· καὶ λέγουσι, Δαιμόνιον ἔχει. Ἦλθεν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων· καὶ λέγουσιν, Ἴδοὺ ἄνθρωπος φάγος καὶ οἰνοπότης, τελωνῶν φίλος καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν. καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς.

2. "Εἶπε δὲ ὁ Κύριος, Τίνι οὖν ὁμοιώσω τοὺς ἀθρώπους τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης; καὶ τίνι εἰσὶν ὅμοιοι; Ὅμοιοί εἰσι παιδίους τοῖς ἐν ἀγορᾷ καθημένοις καὶ προσφωνοῦσιν ἀλλήλοις, καὶ λέγουσιν, Ἠλλήσαμεν ὑμῶν, καὶ οὐκ ὠρχήσασθε· ἐθρηνησαμεν ὑμῶν, καὶ οὐκ ἐκλαίγατε. Ἐλλήλυθε γὰρ Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστῆς μῆτε ἄρτον ἐσθίων μῆτε οἶνον πίνων, καὶ λέγετε, Δαιμόνιον ἔχει. Ἐλλήλυθεν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων, καὶ λέγετε, Ἴδοὺ ἄνθρωπος φάγος καὶ οἰνοπότης, τελωνῶν φίλος καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν. Καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς πάντων."

As we scrutinize these records, the HUMOUR of our Lord breaks out like rippling light over the page. Broadly regarded, how delicious is the taking-down of the listening Rabbis and other dignitaries of the synagogue (and not at all improbably of the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem) by the likening them to a parcel of little children! For myself, having studied from the life such dignitaries-official (not all Jews or Mohammedans), I can easily picture to myself the bewildered amazement with which these "great ones" must have heard themselves thus compared with the children of the streets. Like the "common people" (so called), the Jewish functionaries - ecclesiastical held the "little ones" as beneath their notice; and even the Apostles, as we know, betrayed the same animus, and drew down upon themselves the passionate rebuke of the child-loving Redeemer, not without throbs of semi-indignation, semi-raillery. Therefore it could not fail to be *infra dignitatem* to these super-exalted representatives of official and perfunctory Judaism to have their conduct illustrated and reprimanded by the capricious changeableness of the children. I for one catch a look of the "foolish face of wonder" as they listened, much as when to-day one sees a stiff and starched and most ceremonious pomposity unceremoniously and familiarly spoken to.

But coming closer to the drastic exposure by our Lord of the dignitaries' reception or non-reception of Him and His gospel, the taking-down of these Rabbis, and others of like state and majesty and superiority (all most "superior" persons), must have been aggravated and acerbated by the things wherewith the children were occupied, viz. their mimic and mimetic games, or sports and pastimes. As at the present day all over the East, as I can testify, the children were used to get up mock-marriages and mock-funerals. They would contrive to array themselves as small bridegrooms and

brides, with entourage of attendants; and similarly, by help of their dolls, would arrange a funeral, with tiny bier and other doleful paraphernalia. In both cases, they ended with abundant laughter and mirth. And the like of that was what these most reverend signors were compelled to hear their attitudes toward John the Baptist and toward the Lord Jesus Christ characterized by respectively!

No one without a deep yet also sweetly tender sense of humour could or would have thought out such "wise fooling" (if I may dare so to name it). But this is not all. Over and above, *first*, the utter disregard of the "dignity" of these local dignitaries by placing them alongside of the children; and *second*, the ludicrousness of game and pastime comparisons, there was the added element of TEMPER. The wording pulses with scorn and that "holy wrath" which like light condensing into lightning smote shatteringly; but innerly there was undisguised contempt and derision. Yet was the contempt sheathed in humour, as I am claiming. Look at the way in which our Lord represents the conduct of these "dignitaries," as reflected by the children in their mimetic games of marriage and funeral, e.g. Masters Joseph and Isaac ask Masters Abraham and Moses to join them in a romp or mock-game of a marriage. "No; they won't." Misses Rebecca and Sarah, Esther and Deborah, catching the repulse, come forward and propose a mock funeral. "No; they won't." Masters Joseph and Isaac, and Misses Rebecca and Sarah, Esther and Deborah, wreath arms and "pipe" with their small pipes, and dance their little dances, and ask, "Won't you join?" "No; they won't." Something else is deftly contrived, and again the question is put, "Won't you join?" but with the same surly, sulky, unsocial, unloving reply, "No; they won't." I intentionally represent the thing in a manner childishly; for there lies the humour of it. Unless these Rabbis and associated dignitaries had no slightest touch or sense of humour, they could hardly fail to perceive how, under all the Lord's gravity, He was making fun of them and their stiff-and-starched standing on their hereditary authority and claim on reverence and obedience.

I do not enter upon any exegesis of this not very well understood or explained record. The more its real teaching is got at, the more will it be recognised that jets of humour dart here and there over the Master's words. That is *the* one point I seek to accentuate.

Other incidents in the life of our Lord, whilst He was amongst men,—as we shall see,—harmonize with my conception of this "taking down" of the "great ones"—this ridicule rooted in a sense of humour. I can only name other two in the present Paper:—

(a) *The message to Herod*, St. Luke xiii. 32: "And Jesus said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox." . . . One should have liked to see the pinch-beck ruler's face, when that was told him! Had the noble lion been the metaphor or even the prey-devouring wolf, he might have stomached it. But the humour and contemptuous disregard of him and all his power and evil-purpose of the comparison with the fox, must have been galling in the extreme. It is to be remembered that Tobiah barbed his keenest mockery of Nehemiah and his "wall" around Jerusalem restored, by the same comparison: "What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, seeing they are burned," said Sanballat; and then followed Tobiah the Ammonite, "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall" (Neh. iv. 2, 3). Whether "fox" or "jackal," the message could not but be humiliating to Herod. Self-evidently here again our Lord, in Renan's phrasing, "smiled at His own words."

(b) *The rebuke of Simon's under-breeding*, St. Luke vii. 44-46. There was something deeper than humour here; but humour there also was. Spoken in semi-public again, how must it have taken down the rich and patronizing Pharisee to have it flashed in upon him that the seeming-humble carpenter and peasant of Nazareth knew what a gentleman meant, and who was not a gentleman. And not only so, but it was inevitable that the "odious comparison," to her advantage with "the woman," would draw down on Simon alike the observation and laughter of all who heard. I cannot imagine that this was accidental. I must hold that our Lord enjoyed this putting to confusion of your "dignitaries." I therefore find in this, as in the others, evidence of the humour of Christ. To-day if one has anything of humour in his composition, he relishes deserved rebuke and monition that are spiced (so to say) with successful touches of the ludicrous, so as to take all the starch out of your ultra-dignified folks. Thus I take it was it with our Lord. He was too absolutely human not to value such flooring of spurious dignity.

I shall be glad if my little Paper and its sequel stimulate some others to look into this subordinate, but by no means unimportant, matter. He who has eyes to read between the lines, I think, will have small difficulty in finding a golden thread of humour running through the whole web and web of our Lord's acting and speech. And as with THE MASTER, so with His noblest servant St. Paul. Unless I very much misjudge, he had a keen and scarcely repressible sense of humour, and of the ludicrous and even grotesque in men and things.

Will it be forgiven me, if parson-like, I counsel

that my fellow-servants of Christ would do well to unbend and cultivate, not repress, any faculty of humour they may possess? It needeth not that we talk the world's talk any more than that we go the world's ways to possess and utilize this divinely-bestowed gift. I am far from assuming that the one alternative to the Christian who can use humour is your grim, hard-featured, unrelaxing present-day Pharisee. I willingly concede that there are characters—characters of a blessed and hallowed likeness to their Lord—which overflow with a tender and winning love and loveliness, yet are seldom prompted to laughter. So be it. "There are diversities of operation, but the same Spirit." But none the less I must affirm that I am increasingly satisfied that your Christian who never laughs, and who shrinks from anything approaching wit or humour, weakens his influence, especially in intercourse with the young. On the other hand, I am equally satisfied that a whole-hearted, pleasant, gladsome Christian who can sanctify the faculty of humour as a God-given thing, to be used like any other "talent" for the Master, and not wrapped up in a napkin, adds to his influence in all that makes for righteousness. It would be an insult to distinguish the play of humour I advocate from "foolish jesting," and the "loud laugh that shows the vacant mind." Ethically, too, laughter is what God Almighty uses. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision*" (Ps. ii. 2-4). This "laughter" and "derision" of

Jehovah prepare us for the same in our Lord as He was "God manifest in the flesh." More than that, He who condemns laughter, derision, contempt (though not scorn), tacitly reflects upon God's own acting, and pronounces against God's own endowment of man with the faculties of laughter and humour. I am aware that a mediæval legend tells us that whilst Jesus wept He is nowhere represented as laughing. I traverse the statement. In a hundred places in the Gospels, actions are declarative of the face of the Lord having been radiant with smiles, and the voice attuned to pleasant laughter. Grace, therefore, will seek to sanctify and serve with humour and laughter, not to "charge God foolishly," by seeking to extirpate either. I close my Paper with all gravity. It is in my conception, I must reiterate, profoundly irreligious to frown upon the exercise of any faculty that has been bestowed upon us. If we possess it not, we must acquiesce; but do not let us challenge God, or challenge our fellow-creatures, to whom it is a joy to realize the humour of our Lord.

\* \* It ought, perhaps, to have been noted that whilst in the incident at Nazareth by ἀγορά is not necessarily to be understood the market-place, yet as simple matter of fact there the "market-place" is the open space where the children engage in their mimetic pastimes. I have watched them in various bazaars or Eastern marts—once off the street called "Straight," in Damascus, and often in Cairo, Constantinople, etc. Not far from the open space and market of Nazareth stands its ancient synagogue, with bevelled foundation stones, so that one felt that one's eyes were looking on the almost unchanged scene of our Lord's observation.

## After the Exile.

*After the Exile: A Hundred Years of Jewish History and Literature.* Part II. The Coming of Ezra to the Samaritan Schism. By P. HAY HUNTER, Minister of Yester. Oliphant, Anderson, & Ferrier, Edinburgh, 1890, 5s.

THE period of Jewish history covered by this work is one with which many readers of Scripture have a small acquaintance and in which they take but a feeble interest. To all such we commend the study of the above volume. They will not meet with a dry page from beginning to end. The book sustains the reputation gained by Mr. Hunter in previous works of kindred aim. To the execution of his task the author brings a thorough grasp of the details of the situation, and his power of graphic description leaves nothing to be desired. The leaders of Israel move before us as real characters, men of like passions with ourselves, some of them

indeed men of passion in more senses than one. Mr. Hunter does not discuss in much detail the thorny questions of the date and the relations to one another of the Deuteronomic legislation and the "Priestly Code," etc., although it is plain that he is at home in the literature of these questions. Many readers will probably welcome this giving them of results instead of processes, which secures a continuous narrative instead of one frequently interrupted by critical discussions. It may suffice to say that Mr. Hunter, while far from accepting traditional opinions, declines to receive the conclusions of extreme critics as to the liberties Ezra permitted himself in his redaction of the *Torah*. The Jewish legends about Ezra and the great synagogue are submitted to examination, and the volume closes with an estimate of the work of Ezra and his school in setting "a hedge" about Judaism, as well as unconsciously serving a *pedagogic* purpose with a view to the gospel of Christ.

J. A. SELBIE.