

**SEVENTEEN
SERMONS ON
THE NATIVITY**

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Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity by Lancelot Andrewes

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LANCELOT ANDREWES

**SEVENTEEN
SERMONS ON
THE NATIVITY**

SEVENTEEN SERMONS

ON THE

NATIVITY

BY THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE AND REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

LANCELOT ANDREWES

Sometime Lord Bishop of Winchester

A NEW EDITION



LONDON

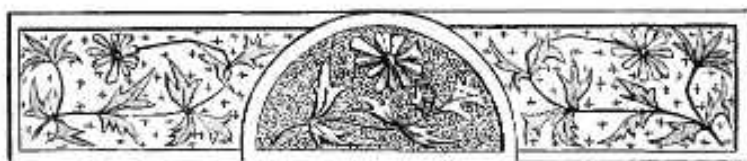
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P R E F A C E .

LANCELOT ANDREWES was born in Thames Street, London, in the year 1555; educated at Cooper's Free School, Radcliffe, and at Merchant Taylors. His industry and ability attracted the notice of Dr Watts, Canon of St. Pauls, who had lately founded some scholarships at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, to one of which he presented this promising scholar. In the year 1576 he became a fellow of his college, and about the same time was made fellow of the newly founded Jesus College at Oxford. His reputation as a scholar was very high, and he is said to have been master of no less than fifteen languages, and to have been thoroughly acquainted with the writings of fathers, schoolmen, casuists, and jurists.

After some few years' occupation at the University he accepted the invitation of the Earl of Huntingdon, "President of the North," to visit him; and his preaching in various places attracted much notice. The favour of Sir Francis Walsingham, minister of Queen Elizabeth, obtained for him preferment first to the parsonage of Alton, then to St. Giles', Cripplegate, London; to which was shortly added a stall at St. Pauls, and another at Southwell, and the mastership of Pembroke Hall at Cambridge. He found this college at a low ebb, and raised it by his diligence to a much better position, leaving it at last with £1000 in its coffers, which had been empty at his entry upon the office.

His next step upwards was his promotion to be chaplain in ordinary to Queen Elizabeth, who greatly admired his preaching, and caused offers of a mitre to be made to him more than once. These offers, however, he was constrained by his conscience to refuse, as they were hampered with some conditions as to alienation of revenues, which he was unable to accept. The spoliation of the monasteries by Henry VIII. had greatly disturbed the settlement of church property, and Andrewes was for a time excluded from the position to which his qualities entitled him by his rigid determination not to injure the heritage of the church. In 1601 he was made Dean of Westminster, and the accession of James opened to him afresh the channels of high preferment. In 1605 he was consecrated Bishop of Chichester, translated to Ely in 1609, and to Winchester in 1618, when he was also made Dean of the Royal Chapel. He continued to hold a high place in the regard of James I., whom he outlived by a couple of years only, and died at Winchester, on his birthday, in 1626, aged seventy-one years. Charles I. esteemed him so highly that after his death he commanded Bishops Laud and Buckeridge to collect and publish his sermons; and it is to their care that we owe the preservation of them to us.

The private character of Andrewes was marked by a peculiar sanctity, charity, and integrity, upon which in this brief preface it is impossible to dwell. His place in the history of the English Church is of deep interest and high importance. When Andrewes obtained his fellowship, Laud was but three years old, and he had attained to the highest dignity of his life, namely, the see of Winchester, three years before Laud's consecration as Bishop of St. Davids. In the teaching and religious practice of Lancelot Andrewes, however, we find all those doctrines and customs for which Laud contended, and which some seem to fancy he forced upon the Church. It cannot, however, fail to amend

notions of this kind, to find what were the doctrines and ritual of this Elizabethan court chaplain and Jacobean bishop; and an interest apart from that which must be created by his genius, learning, and character, belongs to him as the exponent of the mind and practice of the English Church in the years that intervened between the Reformation and the Revolution. The noisy faction of the Puritans was beginning to be troublesome even in the later years of Elizabeth; and their controversial clamour has seemed to drown other voices of the time, fuller of a truer harmony; but in the pages of Andrewes we find a clear and lucid exposition of sound Church doctrine, while the puritan description of his chapel, when Bishop of Ely, with its "credence, lavabo basin, altar candles, censer, &c.," and his ritual notes upon the Prayer Book (printed in Nicholls' Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer), show us with what reverent and ceremonious circumstance the worship of that time was rendered.

In this volume of sermons preached upon Christmas Day, his firm grasp of the Doctrine of the Incarnation is clearly manifested; and the close relation between the apprehension of this Verity, and the place in worship of the Blessed Eucharist, is particularly illustrated. To treat with freshness the same topic on seventeen different occasions is, as most preachers will allow, no mean test of power; but in these sermons of Bishop Andrewes no reader can fail to be charmed with the constant variety of treatment displayed in them, the great wealth of Scriptural illustration, and the profound depth of insight, which detects in the most seemingly insignificant details, matter of rich dogmatic truth. He cuts and polishes a text, like a jeweller a diamond, and the rays of truth from its heart of light flash from every facet. As models of division and treatment, and as mines of learning and eloquent illustration, these sermons are invaluable to a preacher, and with a view to specially

emphasising this value, an index of Scriptural references has been added to this edition. To the general reader they appeal as devout homilies, which gather many truths about the central doctrine of the Holy Incarnation, and build up Christian conduct and temper upon the sure foundation of dogmatic instruction.

As for the Puritan charge that his puns and quips made the sermons worthless, it may be said that it is easier to attack the manner than the matter of his discourses; and that in common with the men of his day he had a quick ear to detect similarities of sound, and made use of this skill to display similarities and dissimilarities of sense. But no one who has read the sermons could assert that they are marred by the slightest levity of expression. The pithy, balanced phrases would dwell in the memories of those that heard them, but would be the despair of those too dull to imitate them; especially when we remember that the Bishop's delivery was extolled by his contemporaries as highly as his composition. The church at any time would be enriched by the genius of such a preacher; and both preachers and congregations of to-day may learn much from him. That these, his Christmas day sermons, may influence an ever widening audience with their practical, devotional, and doctrinal teaching, is the hope of the

EDITOR.



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