

Christmas Snow and Other Poems

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CHRISTMAS SNOW

Today the ground is white;
Snow has fallen and covered the earth like a blanket
Beneath the snow, the plants lie warm and snug
Waiting sleepily for the coming of Spring.

In God's time there is always a time of waiting
We say "I want" and God says "now - but not yet"
He has given us the gift of Jesus "now"
But "not yet" is all revealed to our eyes.

There is much evil, much sorrow and much despair
But God has not forgotten - He does not change His mind
As the Spring bulbs grow unseen under the snow
So God's purposes are working out - unseen but sure.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

Sometimes people irritate
People I love and respect
God's own people - so strange and full of contradictions
New men and women in Jesus Christ
Strong, humble, reliable, stout hearted
Looking to God's Word and to His Spirit
Yet also weak, proud, ready to fall
Conformed to the mould of this world.

What must you think of us, Father?
What must you think of your church?
So weak - and yet so strong
So true - and yet so false

Thank you Lord that you do not put out the flickering flame
Thank you Lord that your strength is made perfect in
weakness.
Help me Lord not to judge others according to my own lights
Help me Lord to look at others through the eyes of Jesus
Christ.

A DISMAL DAY

Cold, rainy, dull, depressing
That's the kind of day it is.
Do I feel the weather in my soul?
Of course I do

It is so easy to stumble
To feel as dreary as the weather
Grey, dark, splattered, muddy,
To feel as useless as the fag-end, floating in the gutter
Or like the crisp bag on the wet grass

But even in these times we are of value to God
He who created all things
From the smallest to the greatest
How sad he must be, to see the human race,
How much we fall short of his likeness
But God is not without hope
His Son is our hope.

LIFE IS SHORT

A long, routine nondescript day
Plenty to do, but lacking the will to do it.
When we are young, life stretched out before us
Like a great sea, rippling towards the horizon.
But soon that distant line comes nearer
Life is short, time goes fast.
So much intended, so little done.
So many ideals which were keen and sharp
Now are blunt or forgotten

Zeal for the Lord
No longer burns in me like a fire.
But the Lord can restore
The years which the locust has eaten
He can put a new song in my mouth
He can give me a new heart.

I AM EMBARRASSED

Lord, I feel good today
Not good in my own power
But just good in your strength, Lord,
In your loving goodness.

How trite we make it all seem
But for you it was not so
To see your own Son stretched out on a Cross
To hear his words of forgiveness, of desolation and of triumph

Lord you alone are good
You alone could give your own Son
And he died to make me good?
Lord I feel embarrassed

It is too much!
Did you have to go so far?
Lord, how much easier it would be
If you loved me just a little less.

TOO MUCH THINKING

We have to use our minds so much
Just to make our bodies work
To go about our daily round
To earn our living
To organise ourselves in the way we want
But do we sometimes use our minds too much?
Do we stifle what we feel in our hearts?
Do we speak of you as "Our Father"
Whilst we think of you as something else?

Too often we think of you as a thing
Perhaps even a "being", great - yes, and wonderful.

But do we feel and experience your love
That love poured out on Calvary's tree
That love which does not stop short
Lord, may I experience you more
That your love may melt my cold heart

My trained and educated mind
May it be less narrow
May it be more open to you
May I be more like Jesus Christ

IT'S A BATTLE

There are times when it all seems a battle
Everything we say seems to be misunderstood
People are awkward; difficult to please.
But what of us?
What about the plank in our own eye
Are we not too quick to judge?
To assume the worst in others
To ask more of them than we ask of ourselves
The question is - how does Jesus see them?

FEELINGS

Feelings that are inside and won't come out
Feelings so deep that I don't know what they are
Who am I? What's it all about?

Sometimes it's as though there's a deep joy and sadness
How I long for the luxury of tears
Not tears wasted on hurt pride or pride of foolish vanity

But tears which themselves flow from the heart of God
Do I envy those with superficial joy?
Sometimes I do.

Blessed are those who seem to sail through life unscathed
Or are they?
The wounds of life may also be our healing

They draw us to the mystery of the Godhead
I may feel crushed but I'm not destroyed
If I am God's child, surely that's for ever
Yes, for ever and for ever and for ever.

CHARITY AND OLD AGE

Charity - what's it all about?
Better lives for others
More money in the pocket
More food in the larder
More coal on the fire
More help in old age?

But charity can be cold as ice
A mere exercise in "people play"
If our interest is "the system"
Or making ourselves "feel good"

Thank you, thank you and thank you!
Thank you, thank you and thank you!
How these words sound like music to our ears
Coming from the lips of grateful "clients".

How will we be when we are old?
Lumbered with worn-out bodies
Knees trembling, fingers twisted, minds confused
Our hearing dull, our sight and senses dimmed

Where will our charity be then?
With all the people we once helped long dead?

The clever theories, the books and articles we read
The plans we made, advice so freely given?

Will they be mere words, just phrases vaguely remembered?
Like waking suddenly out of a dream?

And life will be gone before we've grasped its meaning.

STEEPLES

Steeple - they point our eyes to Heaven

Steeple - they lighten a stark sky-line

Steeple - they wag an accusing finger

Steeple - they may say "Glory to God"

Steeple - they may say "Glory to man"

Steeple - they and their noisy bells will crumble to dust

Steeple - they are nothing beside He who built the starry
skies

Steeple - they remind us of what - the carpenter of
Nazareth?

Steeple - they remind us that all is vanity

SEASIDE HOLIDAYS

The smell of the sea
The crunch of sand beneath our feet
The sound of pop songs and roller-coasters
The tuneless jangle from the ice cream van
Funny hats, peeling arms,
Dark glasses, baggy shorts,
Chip bags, saucy postcards

Do we feel as silly as we look?
All set to enjoy - come what may
Huddling to keep warm against the bracing air
Shivering in our C & A's beach-wear
Stubbing our toes on hidden stones
Getting stuck in ancient deck-chairs
Paddling bravely in the icy waters
Shrieking when it splashes our ankles.

And when it rains, we trail round "Woolies"
Gazing at things we've seen a hundred times before
Wishing we didn't wish we were back home.

When the holiday is over, we say "farewell" to "Seaview"
Thank you, Mrs Thing, for being so kind
[She'd skin a louse for its tallow, mean old crow]
We'll see you again next year [well maybe not]

Then it's into the car and away
Soon we'll see it - home sweet home
That's the part of our holiday
We like the best of all.

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

A long week - or a short week
A bit of both
And how do I know - and does it matter?

Life itself is so precious
Each second of great value
Yet we fritter it away
Wasting our God-given time

Why do we put in time?
Afraid that we may start to think
Having to face life and death
Shaky marriages, delinquent kids
Jobs we can't stand
Debt that weighs us down
Like an albatross round our necks

God's blessings are new every morning
He wants us to live each day
But not for each day
Do not be anxious about tomorrow
Today has cares of its own.

RED SANDSTONE

Taken from the depths
Hidden under the earth
It emerges red and clean
A marvel of creation

Now moulded and shaped
Into proud, confident blocks
Built into great walls of high tenement houses

Bay windows, turrets
Archways and chimney stacks
Stained glass and tiled closes
Set foursquare, strongly founded

Soot and grime, petrol fumes
Years of rain and "Scotch mist"
These have taken their toll
Reducing grand to ordinary

But these are homes
Part of the living city
Families have come and gone
Children played beneath the walls

Will you last for ever
Despite the passing of the years?
Nothing does; it all crumbles
The wind blows and it is gone

THE LIBRARY

Ssssh - be quiet!
Silence- don't talk
This is a place of study
Where we all act "properly".

It's like a cathedral
High roofed and airy
A great gallery of shelves
Reading booths like confessionals

I want to borrow a book
I must approach the altar
The acolyte takes my card
It seems that all is well

How much dead thought lies here
Ancient tomes like gravestones
Monuments to days and nights
Thoughts and tears and joys

I move from aisle to transept
From nave to apse
From side-chapel to aisle
Yet - whose house is it?

A WALK IN PARTICK

A strange feeling of unease
Where is north, where is south
Why can't I follow the map?
Have I been here before?

Why don't people hear what I say?
Am I so odd, my intonation so foreign?
Do I look out of place?
Are my clothes as odd as they feel?

We're all strangers in a strange land
Like Ruth of Old Testament times
Maybe we do belong
Yet maybe we don't

These narrow streets
These dusty pavements
These chip bags flying in the air
These iron-barred shops

Bookies, pubs, fast-food
Cheap clothes, pawn shops
Here they buy and sell all hours
Do some of them never close?

A young man in tight jeans
Stands in a doorway, looking sullen
He watches me as I pass by
Does he wish me good or ill?

A woman shuffles past
In slippers, fag in hand
Trailing a weary, tired old dog
Seeming to count every step

An Indian woman in her shop
Glares suspiciously as I pass

Two giggling girls, exchanging sexual lore
Break into loud laughter
At some swopped intimacy

A blowsy woman, of uncertain age
With leather skirt and tart-like look
Bedecked with chains and bangles
Flashes her thigh at passing men
Waiting to ply her trade of the night

The traffic roars, both day and night
Relentless, unending, often trivial
Taking people from nowhere to nowhere
Eating up the miles, keeping moving

What panic there would be if we had to stop!
We might have to think of life's meaning
And that would never do.

Partick is part of the *City of Glasgow*.
The poem was written when the writer was a student at *Jordanhill College of Education*.

A NEW DAY

What will it be today?
Frustration, disappointment
Pleasure, opportunity
Pleasure, opportunity
Fear, dislike
Pleasure, love?

Who decides?
Is it God?
Is it me?
Am I helpless?
Is it my choice?

God holds me in the hollow of his hand
His love is new every morning
Why am I slow to claim
Those precious words?

Help me today to lean
Not on myself but on the spirit
The spirit which prevents us
The spirit which surrounds us
The spirit which upholds us

MISTS AND SOUNDS

Mists and sounds
Distant thuds and creaking
A strange place
And here I am, a stranger

No sun, but the rumble of trains
No rain, but a smell of the city

God looks down on his children
Day by day, wherever we are
Why do I often feel alone?
The only pebble on the beach
Where people crowd around us like ants
Yet are as distant as the far hills

I see a woman on her way to work
Stout, overweight, yet dogged in her steps
Lighting the cigarette which does her harm
Yet without which she cannot live.

What story have you to tell?
Of sorrow and joy
Of hope and sadness
Of days gone by?

Do others watch me
And wonder - who is he
The grey-bearded man
With the sad face?

TIME AND TIDE

Like a river, it runs and runs
Sometimes in slow pools
Or dashing over the rocks
Overflowing its banks
or drying to a trickle

Time is all the same
Sixty minutes in the hour
Yet some is fast
And some is slow
Moments that pass
And time that drags

In God's sight, a thousand years are as a day
And a day is as a thousand years.

Lord, help me to redeem the time
I can't relive what's gone
But nothing is wasted in God
Who holds us in the hollow of his hand

But the tide won't wait
And my life must change

God, help me to know
That though I'm safe in you
I must give myself anew
Day by day by day by day.

GOODBYE OLD SCHOOL

Once you were so sound and steady
Red brick, 1930's and proud of it!
Imposing entrance and high ceilings
Plaques on the walls to the great and the good.

Once you echoed to hundreds of voices
Voices of happiness hope and despair
Dreams for tomorrow and high aspirations
Dread of shortcomings and failing the grade

Maths and Science, French and German,
Latin and Greek, English and History,
Only some of the subjects we learned
For school was much more than those

Here we made friends
Here we lost friends
Here we began to learn who we were
And who perhaps we might become.

The empty rooms, now sad and neglected
Our handsome school hall now bleak and forlorn
Waiting their fate at the hands of the smashers
Dust and ashes you soon will become.

Goodbye old school and thanks for the memories
Goodbye to the ghosts of people long dead
Goodbye to my teachers and those whom I knew
Goodbye and thank you, old school

Labor Omnia Vincit? - well, maybe.

This was written to mark the demolition of the "old" Dunfermline High School building in 2012,
Labor Omnia Vincit is the school motto as is also *Quidquid Agis Age Pro Viribus*.

I AM NO PROBLEM

As we draw into Autumn
Our thoughts are on the Summer that is gone
We had hoped for better
We always do

When we look at our lives
Our thoughts are on what they have been
And what they might have been
We had hoped for better
We always do
Yet we are as we are - and we were what we were

What might have been is like a story in a book
It's good to read - but it isn't real
There is only one true me
If others have problems with me
What do they expect me to do?

I cannot jump out of my skin
I cannot change my past
I cannot change you

But you can change how you look at me
To me, I make perfect sense
To me, I'm a whole person
To me, the world goes round in the same way as it does for
you.

I need your friendship, not your pity
I value friends who take me as I am
Who do not judge according to their rules
Who listen even when they don't quite understand
Who take time to work things through with me
Who don't regard me as a "case" or a "problem"

I am no problem. I'm just me

Read at an ecumenical service for Mental Health Week 2012 held in Union
Terrace Gardens, Aberdeen.

Alasdair Gordon was born in Aberdeen in 1943. He was educated at Dunfermline High School and is a graduate in Law and Divinity of Edinburgh University.

Alasdair was employed by the Church of Scotland for eleven years. Thereafter he worked for a large city based charity in Aberdeen for nearly ten years.

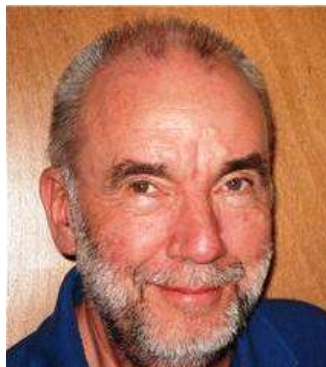
From there he moved on to take up a post of Lecturer in Business Studies at Aberdeen College, also qualifying as a registered teacher (further education).

Alasdair has written three student textbooks on Scots Law and was also a contributor to the Dictionary of Evangelical Biography.

For the last part of his working life, Alasdair worked as Personal Development Tutor in a Brain Injury Vocational Centre, supporting people recovering from brain injury.

Alasdair is a registered Hypnotherapist and a Certified NLP Master Practitioner. He also holds a taught Doctoral Degree (EdD) from Calamus International University (BWI) in Change Agent Studies.

Alasdair and his wife Carole both retired in 2011. They now live in Hamilton, South Lanarkshire, Scotland (UK).



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