

# Christmas Snow and Other Poems

Alasdair Bothwell Gordon

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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*.

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