

THE MYSTERY OF BETHLEHEM

"At Bethlehem," said Leo the Great,
 "two natures met together in one Redeemer.
 Nothing is lacking in either;

entire majesty and entire littleness;
 his the infirmity whose is the power.
 The selfsame person is both capable and
 conqueror of death.
 God knit himself to manhood in pity
 and in power."

What a rebuke such a magnificent, ancient
 theological statement is
 to the frivolous and superficial words
 we often use at Advent season when
 we speak of a Merry Christmas!

The central figure in the story of Bethlehem
 is not Joseph or Mary or the shepherds
 or the angels or the Magi --
 but the Holy Child.

"I cannot tell why He whom angels worship
 should set His love upon the sons of men,
 Or why as Shepherd He should seek the wanderers
 and bring them back, I know not how or when.
 But this I know, that He was born of Mary,
 When Bethlehem's stable was his only home,
 And that at Nazareth He lived and labored,
 And so the Savior, Savior of the world
 is come."

God's love manifested at the Advent
 was dying love,
 and we lose all the meaning of Christmas
 if we fail to realize that God so loved us
 as to send His Son to be our Redeemer
 on the Cross.

The Star and the Cross go together.
 Do not separate them.

The purpose of the Incarnation was
 the Redemption.

Mary understood the mystery of her son's birth
better at Calvary than at Bethlehem.
Our Merry Christmas needs that note
to make it a Holy Christmas.
Then we shall have peace in our hearts
and good will to men.
The Peace of God's Son,
the Prince of Peace.

"I cannot tell how patiently He suffered
when with His peace He graced this
place of tears,
Or how upon the Cross His heart was broken,
The crown of pain to three and thirty years.
But this I know, He heals the broken-hearted,
And stays their sins and calms their
lurking fear,
And lifts the burden from the heavy-laden,
And so the Savior, Savior of the world
is here."

* THE DEEP DESCENT OF JESUS FROM HEAVEN
TO EARTH.

He came down from the adorations of Heaven
to the abominations of earth.
He came down from the blessedness of heaven
to the bruises of crucifixion tortures.
He came down from the coronations of heaven
to the condemnations of earth.
He came down from the delights of heaven
to the defamations of earth.
He came down from the excellencies of heaven
to the executions of earth.
He came down from the favor of the Father's face
to the fury of men's faces.
He came down from the glory place
to the gory place.
He came down from the hallelujahs of heaven
to the hisses of the earth.
He came down from the intercessions of
heaven
to the injustices of earth.

He came down from the joys of heaven
to the jeers of the mobs of earth.
He came down from the kindness of heaven
to the killing of earth.
He came down from the love of heaven
to the lying accusations of earth.
He came down from the majesties of heaven
to the miseries of earth.
He came down from the praise of heaven
to the persecutions of earth.
He came down from the riches of heaven
to the revilings and ridicules of earth.
He came down from the songs of heaven
to the sneers and scars of earth.
He came down from the throne of heaven
to the tree of Calvary.
He came down from the virtues of heaven
to the vices of earth.
He came down from the worship of angelic hosts
to the homeless wanderings over earth
and to the wrath and wrangling of evil men.

THE DISGRACEFUL WAY IN WHICH SOME
CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS.

Vain, frothy, carnal ---
these three words can be written over the
celebration of many who "make merry" at
the Christmas season.
Tell me, why should more sin be committed
at the Christmas season in a few days
than in many weeks at other times?
Such disgraceful observance of the birth of
Christ is an insult to a holy God,
a reproach to the Christian name,
and a ruinous matter to the souls of men.
At the Christmas festival,
which is the commemoration of the incarnation
of Him to whom God has given a name
which is above every name,
many are found at any place or every place
rather than at ~~the~~ Bethlehem's manger.
The sight which the Eastern wise men came
such a vast distance to behold,
which drew all heaven down to earth,
is nothing to them.

Some, while they observe the day of Christ's birth by doing no work,
not only neglect but insult Him
by ritous living and
indulgence in the works of the flesh.
Instead of fixing their eyes on the Star
of Bethlehem,
they give attention to the little, debasing,
vexing, defiling things of the world.

Let us not seek to be distinguished by
such worldly conduct,
but, looking upon the Babe of Bethlehem,
the desire of all nations,
let us give Him the glory which is due
unto His holy name.

Let us behold in Him God's provision
for our recovery from sin's ruinous damage.
Since He is placed so easily within our reach,
let us embrace Him and exclaim,

"Lo, this is our God!
We have waited for him,
and he will save us!

This is the Lord!

We have waited for him!

We will be glad

and rejoice in His salvation."

Let us follow the example of the shepherds
not only in our going,
but in our return.

"And when they had seen it,
they made known abroad the saying that was
told them concerning the child."

When Martin Niemoller visited the US
after the Second World War, he was followed
by a group of reporters who expected him
to talk about his harrowing experiences
in a concentration camp
or about conditions in postwar Germany.
One by one the reporters left him;
however, one of them unknowingly paid him
a compliment by saying disgustedly:
"All that man talks about is Jesus Christ!"