How Still The Night

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The Christmas Poems
of
Father Andrew, S.D.C.

From

Carols And Christmas Rhymes

London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1935

How still the night,
How still the stars,
How still that little sleeping town,
How like a jewel in God's crown
That Star of stars
That shines so bright.

Compiled and Edited By
Douglas D. Anderson
2007

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Foreword From Father Andrew

"Christmas comes but once a year" is the common saying. But to the Catholic Christian Christmas is always here. Every babe born into the world now comes with the authentic claim of a child of God, for did not the Christ say, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto me one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me'? So this little gathering of 'Carols and Christmas Rhymes,' which is sent forth to be perhaps somebody's gift-book at Christmas time, would give nevertheless for its message the great truth that the Incarnation of the Son of God has sanctified all life and made the quilted cot in the palace and the poor home-made orange-box cradle in the cottage equally manger-beds of the Babe of Bethlehem.

To the Catholic Christian the Lord comes in the Blessed Sacrament still clothed with the lowliness of long ago, and as in the lifting up of His Sacrifice there is the perpetual memory of His Death and Passion, so in the singing of the Gloria in excelsis and the humility of that Sacrament wherein the great reality of His Presence lies hidden beneath the lowly veils of bread and wine, Bethlehem is set forth beneath the lowly veils of bread and wine, Bethlehem is set forth before us most surely Sunday by Sunday and day by day.

In the High Mass, as the three sacred ministers bow before the altar, we may see again a vision of the Wise Men coming withing with their gifts; and as our young men and old men, matrons and maidens, come to the Holy Mysteries, we may think of the shepherds and folk at Bethlehem, who came with dim wonderment to a Mystery they felt but did not understand, as they peeped at Mary's Babe at the first Christmastide.

There are certain notes which have always sounded in the mind of the writer of these poems, and he would wish to emphasize them as the main message that he would hope his readers might gather from his songs. The Mystery of the Incarnate Love has brought to us, first of all, a revelation of simplicity. Theology teaches us that the life of God is a simple act, and, since God is Love, that act must surely be, however expressed, an act of love; and here in the little Babe laid in the midst of the straw of our human poverty is the simple appeal and revelation of the love of God. The second note is sympathy, and that in the direct meaning of the word – 'suffering with.' We cannot understand the mystery of suffering, and really there is no particular reason why we should, since God has suffered with us, and one of the sufferings of God was this very mystery of suffering, for did not He take upon His lips the great classic words of the twenty-second Psalm and cry in His own darkness, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

The third note is joy. These poems and carols all have in them a note of joy and a note of pain. Laughter and tears are mingled in these Christmas songs. The fourth is the sacredness of human nature. God joined together flesh and spirit. Sin put these asunder, and by the fall of man the flesh, which was only lower than spirit in condition and degree, became lower also in quality, and by the taint and twist of original sin this human nature of ours was made to seem a bad thing, as though the flesh were, in God's intention, the enemy of spirit. In the coming of the Holy Child, when the angels sang their Gloria, once more flesh and spirit were united in perfect oblation. The fifth note, which contains in it all else, is love. Over the cross, over the manger, over the altar, one can write the golden words, 'God is Love.'

Sentiment is not a bad thing. It is often a very good beginning, but it is a very poor end, and indeed, if it is an end, it is an enemy. The poverty of Bethlehem was real, as the pain of the cross was real, and it is well in our thought to get away from Christmas cards and stained-glass windows which suggest poverty unreal and picturesque. The writer hopes that these simple songs may be allowed to strike a deeper note, and would pray for himself and his readers that mediation on the Birth of Christ might always be a nearer approach to reality. If we believe that the everlasting God, because of our meagre welcome, was given a manger for His first resting-place and a gibbet for his last, we should swear by the manger and the cross that it shall not be possible, if we can help it, for the human nature that He took ever to be treated in such fashion again. We have been told that on Christmas Day in the great war from rival trenches English, French, and German voices were united musically in Christmas hymns. That should have been the end of the way. It should be the ending of all wars, and all slum conditions, and all bad treatment of the childhood that the Christ-Child has blessed. With such practical intention these poor verses are laid in homage before the manger shrine of the Holy Child.

Since his kind publishers have thought that this collection would serve a Christmas purpose, the author is only too glad to add to their judgment the endorsement of this Foreword.

Andrew, S.D.C.
The Feast of the Visitation of our Lady
July 2nd, 1935

Father Andrew

1969-1946

Father Andrew (Henry Ernest Hardy, 1869-1946) co-founded, with Father Adderly and Father Chappel, the Society of the Divine Compassion, the first Franciscan order in the Anglican Church, in mid-January 1894. The ideals of the Society was described by Father Andrew:

> The Society of the Divine Compassion is a community of priests, deacons, and communicant laymen, banded together in a common life of poverty, chastity, and obedience for the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the benefit of His Holy Catholic Church, to worship Him and to work for Him and all mankind, especially the poor and suffering, in imitation of the Divine Master, seeking the help of one another in thus obeying Him.

On June 9, 1895 (Trinity Sunday), he was the first man ordained a priest in that religious habit since the Reformation. The center of the order was St. Philip's Church, located in one of the poorer sections of London. He was well known as a spiritual guide, and was also known for his art, prose and poetry. The society began to decline after his death on March 31, 1946, and was absorbed into the Society of St. Francis in 1952.

He was remembered for his faith, holiness, courage, and love. He was also a powerful preacher. In his autobiography, Kathleen Burne relates the story of an agnostic schoolboy who attended church with his mother one Sunday morning, curious why she would travel so far to this church. Afterwards he said: "Mother, that was the most terrifying service I ever was at. It made me sweat all over.... It was the first service I ever went to at which I felt something really happened."

These Christmas poems were extracted from the following editions by Father Andrew: *Love's Argument* (1922), *Love's Pilgrimage* (1927), *The Divine Compassion* (1930), and *Horizons* (1933), his first four volumes of poetry. Four other volumes would follow, including one posthumously. He also published 19 volumes of prose (two posthumous) and five plays (a sixth play was performed but never printed).

For more information, see *Life and Letters of Father Andrew* by Kathleen E. Burne (1948). She also edited *Love's Fulfilment: An Anthology from the Writings of Father Andrew* (1957) and *The Wisdom of Father Andrew*.

Most of the volumes by and about Father Andrew were published in London by A. R. Mowbray and Co. Ltd.

Editor's Note

I have followed the spelling and punctuation as found in the original source. Errors only are my own, and I am mindful of the advice of William Hone (1823):

> "... I am bound to confess the existence of a few errors, not affecting the sense, that were discovered too late for correction, though in sufficient time to enable me to affirm, as a warning to others, that *the worst editor of an author's writings is himself*."

Additional poetry, recordings, and a large number of hymns, carols and other songs of the Christmas-tide are also available at my website, *The Hymns and Carols of Christmas* (www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com).

Douglas D. Anderson
Tigard, Oregon, USA
June 5, 2007

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The Christmas Poems of Father Andrew

The Holy Night

How still the night,
How still the stars,
How still that little sleeping town,
How like a jewel in God's crown
That Star of stars
That shines so bright.

How silver sweet
The moon doth shine;
Lo, yonder little cattle-shed
Shall lend a straw-strewn manger bed
To Babe divine
And Mother sweet.

To all our race
The light hath come;
For He Who lies 'neath quilt of straw,
That homeless One Whom shepherds saw
Himself our Home,
Reveals God's Face.

Carol

A Babe was born in Bethlehem
Years ago – years ago.
And shepherds brought their lambs with them
Through the snow – through the snow,
To where that little Lambkin lay
Cradled in a nest of hay,
God's dear mercy come that day,
Years ago – years ago.

Ah, would I had been one of them,
Years ago – years ago,
To find my way to Bethlehem
Though the snow – through the snow,
To kneel before His Mother sweet,
To make obeisance mute and meet,
To kiss His darling, simpled feet,
Years ago – years ago.

Yet hearken, soul, He saith to thee,
Thou must know – thou thou know,
'Ye have done it unto Me,
Well I trow – well I trow,
Who My little ones have fed,
Who My poor have shepherded,
Ye My Heart have comforted
In the snow – in the snow.'

Through Angel's Eyes

The winter night knows many a star,
But the Angels have found one brighter far
Than any that ever has shone before;
They float and fall through the silent snow
Like birds of God, to settle below;
To find our earth the Angels go.

A poor little planet, a poor little town,
A poor little cradle, not lined with down,
A particular absence of all renown;
Angels must be peculiar things,
Who float and fall with wheeling wings
To seek in such for the King of kings.

If we were heaven-taught we should know
That what we think high God might yet think low,
And straight to Bethlehem singing go;
For this earth of ours is still the Star
Whither the Angels flew from far,
Where the Christ-child and His Mother are.

More bright than the star that Wisdom led,
To Angels' eyes shone the cattle-shed,
Where the little Christ once laid His head;
And 'twixt the tapers, just the same
As when to Bethlehem once they came,
To Angels' eyes must the altar flame.

Deus Absconditus

Behind each mystery a greater lies,
The kind soul looks upon us through kind eyes,
Yet both are mysteries;
And once, beneath the silver of a star,
There knelt three Travellers who came from far,
And humbly laid great gifts upon the sod,
Before a human Babe Who yet was God.

How should we know our God if He should come?
Where seek Him if He made this earth His home?
The angels knew, the prophets greatly guessed,
He should be found among the lowliest;
And lo, in stable straw He maketh nest.

The Angelic Quest

O Angels, whither would ye fly,
Leaving God's Palace in the sky?
Whither away, whither away?

There is a Palace Beautiful,
And we as courtiers dutiful
Must homage pay, homage pay.

O Angels, to my soul be kind,
For I am seeking, and would find
That Palace fair – take me there.

A little town glows like a gem:
'Tis Bethlehem, 'tis Bethlehem
We hasten there, hasten there.

Christmas Music

Silently, softly the snowflakes are falling,
Cloaking the earth with a garment all white;
Out on the hills there a shepherd is calling,
Folding his flock ere the fall of the night.
All simple things
Go on the same way –
And did angels' wings
Glint gold in the hay?

Solemnly, gladly, from tower and steeple
Ring out the bells over white countryside,
And in ones and twos and in throngs come the people
To drink of the Chalice of One crucified.
The words of the priest
So often are said -
Do men really feast
On heavenly Bread?

And why should we doubt of God's great revelation
Who links what is simple with all that's sublime,
Whose love sought a science of perfect salvation
For men of all nations, all temper, all time?
On simple folk,
In God's perfect way,
The dawn of Love broke
From a manger of hay.

And if He would feed us with perfect self-giving,
The way that is simplest will be the most sure,
As the way of the Cross, most painful, most loving,
Alone could reveal all that Love would endure.
Not more real
On the stable floor
Was the Christmas gift
Than in Church next door.

A Song of Bethlehem

Full many a star has joyed the night
With radiant rays all winsome white,
And the silent song of its silver light;
But never a star threw beams so far,
Of all that were, shall be, or are,
As that twinkling mirth that told the earth
In Bethlehem, in Bethlehem.

And mother's hearts have known the bliss
Of the little babe body they bend to kiss –
But what of that Babe and that Mother of His?
The Angels sing, the Shepherds bring,
As each man may, his offering,
And Sages three, all royally,
Follow a Star from Araby
To Bethlehem, to Bethlehem.

Full many a mother has been poor,
But God was born on a stable floor,
He was the poorest of the poor;
In poverty He proved His love
Who dropt to deeps from heights above –
Where peasants thresh, the Word made Flesh
Will all mankind with love enmesh
At Bethlehem, at Bethlehem.

Come, Gentles, come, come one, come all,
Where the poor are rich, and the rich are small,
And the Christ-Child reigns in cattle stall;
He shall purge you free from wilful sin,
For soul of man is Stable Inn
Where Royal Guest would come to rest,
In baby guise once manifest
At Bethlehem, at Bethlehem.

Adoro Te Devote Latens Deitas

Who could refuse the appeal
Of Baby hands stretched out caressingly,
Or patter of Baby feet upon the stair?
It was like Love to deal
So with us in His sweet humility,
To be a little Child amongst us here;
And at the last, when those same hands had borne
The scars of labour and the pierce of sin,
Faithful at eventide as in the morn
Of His first Coming, still to seek to win,
With bleeding hands held wide in mute appeal,
The acceptance of His own unchanging love.

A Carol of the Three Kings

Jingle, jangle, star and spangle,
Over the wilderness wide,
Tall camels sway in the wilderness way
With their spacious, spongy stride.
And three grave kings with mystic thins,
In search of the King Who is King of kings,
Three steadfast spectres ride.

Stars are shining, silver lining
Leaves of the palm trees grey –
If God should call, forsaking all,
Man must take the wilderness way;
And these must ride, nor ever abide,
On a road so long, through a world so wide,
To a Babe on a bed of hay.

'Dearie, Dearie,' blessed Mary
Croons to her little Son.
And the three grave kings with their mystic things
Kneel low to Him, one by one;
And glad they are, though they come from far,
That they followed the light of the guiding Star
That led to Mary's Son.

Quest

Wide is the darkness, dark is the night,
Only a star
Shining so silverly, flingeth its light
Ever so far;
Yet by its lure are led
Men who have visioned
God's door unlatcheted
And held ajar.

'Restless our souls must be,' Augustine said,
Seeking for Thee,
'Lord, till they rest in Thee,' uncomforted,
Athirst for Thee;
For Thou hast made us so,
And souls must questing go,
Thralled by the golden flow,
Entrancedly.

Lord, let not silver spell of that blest star
Be dimmed for me.
Constant my questing keep, faring so far,
Seeking for Thee;
Nor let pride find a flaw,
Seeing what wise men saw,
Babe in poor stable straw –
Epiphany.

Myrrh

Kings should offer gold, rich, royal men –
And I am poor and no red gold have I;
Must I stay in the cold, sad shadows then,
While kings in light spread splendours splendidly?

Saints should offer incense, holy men –
My shabby soul is soiled and stained with sin;
Must I wait, shut without the stable then,
While saints join kings to offer gifts within?

Lo, I am not alone, but round me here
In the wan shadows, waiting wistfully
With nothing else to bring but only myrrh,
Stands silent, shy, a grey-glad company.

'Tis well for us, we of the common crowd,
That we may bring sad symbollings of myrrh,
Where God lies sleeping 'neath a stable shroud
Of common straw, and leave our offerings there.

We will be glad the incense makes a veil
To hide us somewhat, and the saint's pure prayer
Goes with the golden gifts where we must fail;
Yet we will dare to bring our meed of myrrh.

The Dayspring

The dawn drives off the dark, and day doth come
Queening away the fearsomeness of night;
But all the world is blessed Mary's home,
Nor any hour can lack for her its night
While He, our hearts' one Home, curled cosily,
Can even straw and stall and stable raise
To throne and palace by His royalty;
For perfect Love hath come Who casts out fear –
Now doth the Dayspring from on high appear.

Bethlehem

Humble and human and born of a maiden,
Straw of Thy crib a gold vesture for God,
Children may gaze on Thee, wide-eyed and wondering,
Angels may kiss where Thy Mother hath trod.

Oh, pearls of Paradise, Mary's beloved One,
Stars were created to lead us to Thee;
Love hath its crowning and sorrow its meaning,
All life its interpreting, Saviour, in Thee.

Feed us Thy hungering ones, lighten our loneliness,
Bread for our being be, strength for our pain;
On Thy babe bosom lies all this world's weariness,
And, if it lead to Thee, all this world's gain.

Lovelight

Once down some steep old Syrian stair,
A dim, sweet vision in the night,
Stepped Mary with her Blossom fair,
While God's soft stars gave candle-light.

And oh, how steep life's stairs might be,
And oh, how dark may be the night;
Yet since Love came for you and me
Even thorns have blossomed wondrously,
And through all dark with certainty
Love leads to Light.

The Queen's Hand

Kind Queen of Heaven, lend thy little hand,
And I will press upon it such a kiss
Of homage, reverence, and loyalness
As only heaven's courtiers understand.

I kiss thy priestly hand, so strong, so fair,
Handling so oft the Body of Christ.
He hides Himself from me in Eucharist,
He lay upon thy lap and stroked thy hair.

I kiss the hand that bathed His baby limbs,
I kiss the hand that smoothed His nest of straw
While angels, kneeling round, the wonder saw,
Yielding the haunting homage of their hymns.

I kiss the hand that sewed and swept and baked,
Busied in childhood His dear lips to feed,
That waited all His life upon His need,
Whose touch lent comfort to a Heart that ached.

I kiss the hand that in His latest rest
Tended His Body underneath the Cross;
Our gain was purchased by that awful loss,
I kiss thy hand, of Queens, the royalist.

The Secret

What is the secret of the stars
That drift, drift
Over the mystic sea of the purple night?
Will it ever lift
This mystery? Will Light bring light?
For they keep their secrets these silent stars,
And the songs of Venus, the shouts of Mars,
Who hath heard?
Yet once there were simple men who say
That the night was turned to radiant day,
And a word
Was spoken, a tale was told –
'Tis Lamb of God is laid in the fold
Of this earth' –
So the angels sang, and the shepherds ran
To the manger, and Love and Light began
With Jesu's birth.
And I wot that winsome tale is true,
And wise were those shepherds, and well they knew
The Lamb of God.
And that is the secret of earth and heaven
That 'Unto us a Son is given,'
The Son of God.

Problems at the Manger

O mighty God, O baby King,
Thyself must teach what welcoming
Thy children, old and young, should bring,
How each should make his offering.

For here are little boys and girls,
With tidy clothes and ordered curls;
A little Scout his flag unfurls,
His mother kneels in lace and pearls.

And here are faces pinched and white,
And men who walked about all night;
A soldier who has lost his sight,
A boy whose sums will not come right.

The young, the middle-aged, the old
Are gathered here, some gay with gold,
Some ragged creatures, starved and cold –
The fat and lean are in Thy fold.

And though our hearts at Christmas glow
With sense of shame that things are so,
Yet how to get the world to go
In Christian ways wee do not know.

There's nothing wrong in tidy boys,
It's nice to give expensive toys,
It's natural to make a noise,
And lovely things are perfect joys –

Yet still we kneel before Thy straw
In penitence and puzzling awe –
Show us our system's vital flaw,
And that strong truth the Wise Men saw.

Love, Thou must teach us, every one,
To toil until Thy will be done;
So never in this world again
Shall child be housed in cattle pen.

Hide and Seek

Hide and seek, hide and seek,
Seek, seek, children, seek,
Jesus is hidden away:
He's hidden somewhere in Bethlehem,
But no one knows where in Jerusalem.
Look, look in every nook,
Ask that old scribe who is reading his book,
Ask that old shepherd who leans on his crook,
Search in the stable hay.

Hide and seek, peep, peep;
Little white lamb and old mother sheep,
Have you seen Jesus, say?
He'd hidden somewhere in Bethlehem,
But they can't tell where in Jerusalem.
Where can He be? He's ever so wee –
They say He is born in David's town,
And we have come trooping over the down;
Have angels been this day?

Hide and seek, peer and poke;
He might be under S. Joseph's cloke
Or Mary's robe of blue.
Could we see angels or could we find them,
We'd know we were near Him in Bethlehem,
Where can He be? He's ever so wee –
O look, look, look, come this way;
There, in a nook in a nest in the hay
I can see Him – can you?

The Loveliest Love

Had I been minding lambs those days
When angels came, in angel ways,
And called the shepherd lads with them
To hide-and-seek at Bethlehem,
To seek for Jesus up and down,
And find the King without His crown –
I think I would have tried to prove
Which was the Babe brought from above
By looking for the loveliest Love.
And when, half hidden 'neath the straw,
Mary's wee Babe at last I saw,
I would have guessed that Love alone
Would choose a manger for His throne.
And angels, wonderful and white,
Would all have cried,
'You've guessed quite right.'

Bethlehem

The silver sickle of the moon
Cuts clear the frosty sky,
And, light as pluckings of swan's down,
Over the little sleeping town
The snow falls silently.

On such a night, long years ago,
The same still stars shone down,
Where in the manger of an inn
God did His earthly course begin,
In Bethlehem's tiny town.

The ways of God are hidden ways,
Without advertisement,
Yet it is like Him still to come
And make a village church His home
In lowly Sacrament.

For still the simple shepherd folk
May come in humbleness,
And see indeed a wondrous sight,
God shown in lowliness.

Transeamus usque ad Bethlehem

It was like God to choose the night,
The dead of night, the winter time,
That then should ring the heavenly chime,
That then should shine the eternal Light;

And in the night and in the cold,
With open door for palace gate,
With cattle pen for place of state,
And stable straw for royal gold.

Meek Mary Mother for a queen,
Lifting the little Hand to bless,
And poverty for His largesse,
To hold a court for labouring men.

It was like man to wander far,
And miss the lowly Bethlehem road;
O gentle Jesu, Lamb of God,
Show in our night Thy guiding Star.

Christmas Eve

Oh, Christmas cometh carolling,
And all the merry bells do ring,
To tell how Angels once did sing,
Kneeling about their Baby King,
Born of our Lady Mary.

And it would be a shame to tell
That only clang of brazen bell
Should play earth's part His praise to swell:
It must be you and I as well
Who kneel to Lady Mary.

Then shrive you clean and wash you white,
Keep vigil well this Holy Night;
Angels are shining in the height,
And we shall take ere dawn of light
For Food, the Babe of Mary.

This carol was put to music by Alfred Burt in 1942
under the title "Christmas Cometh Caroling."
See the Alfred Burt Carols Web-Site
http://www.alfredburtcarols.com/

Christmas Questionings

'Where will you make His little bed,
And where shall lie His baby head,
And how shall He be comforted?'
Quoth Joseph to Saint Mary.
'God's Lamb I'll in a manger lay,
And pillow shall He have of hay,
I'll comfort Him as mothers may,'
Quoth Mary, Mother Mary.

'And where is crown for heaven's King,
King's fare and King's appareling?'
So might the Wise Men questioning
Have asked of sweet Saint Mary.
'His crown is just His sacred Head,
For vesture He hath Love instead,
And from my heart His lips are fed,'
Would answer Holy Mary.

'And wherefore hath He come to earth,
And why should God have human birth,
Or poverty make Angels' mirth?
O tell me, Mother Mary.'
'Love ever goeth on Love's quest,
Love ever seeketh Love for rest,
And He would be thy soul's sweet Guest' –
So taught me Blessed Mary.

A Carol

The stars are singing a silver song,
Melody, sweet Melody;
The bells are ringing dong-a ding-dong,
Good sooth, a Benedicite!
'Tis early, early, Christmas Morn
What time our darling Lord was born,
Then let all scorn be put to scorn
For Charity, Saint Charity.

The alter lights glow gold and dim,
Mystery, sweet Mystery;
Come, brothers all, and welcome Him
With wedding-white for purity!
Love lit the flame wise souls that led
To Bethlehem, the House of Bread,
God's children by God's Child are fed –
Gramercy, Lord, Gramercy!

Venite, Adoremus

'Come along, shepherds,' the Angels cried,
'Come along, every one!
For great things happen on earth to-night,
And you shall see a wondrous sight –
In bed of straw, on napkin white,
Come down to earth from heaven's height
God's own Eternal Son.'

'Come along, comrades,' the Shepherds cried,
And quick those men did run,
And in they pressed through the humble door,
And low they knelt on the stable floor,
Where Mary and Joseph, as poor as poor,
In rich contentment did adore
God's own Eternal Son.

'Come along, Christians,' the bells ring out,
'Ding-a-dong, come along, come along!'
For round the Altar tapers shine,
Where waits our Saviour, yours and mine,
Veiled 'neath the mystic Bread and Wine,
And every soul should be a shrine
For God's Eternal Son.

God's Courtesy

Angels go singing, singing through the night,
Flying, floating through the star mazes bright,
Why, why, ah why?
Is there not shame enough on earth to see?
Yea, is there not pain for man in plenty?
Why then should Angels sing,
Dropping on wide, white wing
Through the night sky?

Never was night like this, Angels can tell.
Angels have watched mankind fashioning hell –
Why, why, ah why?
So God Himself all lowly must come down
And make His heaven in Bethlehem's tiny town
Shall not the Angels sing,
Shall not heaven's joy-bells ring
Rending the sky?

Ah, what if man should not know his true King?
Christ's stable will need some discovering.
Why, why, ah why
Should God, when He comes to succour our race,
Have fallen in love with the lowest place?
'Tis for so poor as we –
An Angel whispered me –
God chooseth poverty
In courtesy.

Three Roads to Bethlehem

There are three roads to Bethlehem,
And souls must follow all of them;
For these roads are a Trinity,
And all are one and all are three,
And they were laid for you and me,
Through grace of God's dear courtesy,
By angels working busily
For travellers to that blest country
Where reigneth He – the One – the Three.

The first lies plain for labouring men.
If our kind Lord should come again
And on this earth draw mortal breath,
He'd surely find a Nazareth;
And we shall not begin to see
Our Saviour's sweet humility,
Nor be disciples, if we shirk
The discipline of patient work –
He travels on the Bethlehem way
Who serves his fellows day by day.

To-day – to-morrow – we may meet
The way of suffering, and our feet
May have to follow prints of blood;
And we must take the Holy Food
For strength to tread where Jesus trod,
Climbing the holy mount of God.
Each hour of pain shall then suffice
To offer holy sacrifice –
The way of suffering is not them
Who seek the road to Bethlehem.

The third road is the way of prayer,
And we may find it anywhere;
And prayer is work and often pain,
And pain is prayer, and then again
Work should be prayer, and often is
Set high among life's sanctities
By suffering, and we shall prove
These three roads one, for all are love –
And He trod every one of them
Who lay in straw at Bethlehem.

Lux Mundi

Silence of silver stars, cold in their purity,
Slumber of sleeping souls, heedless of Thee,
Now Thou art come to earth, Light of Infinity,
Each brings her candles, to light them from Thee,

Since Thou hast borne them, then shine through our sorrows.
Preach in our pity, and love in our love.
Save with our sympathy, plead in our worship,
Lift up our living to Heaven above.

Humble and human and born of a Maiden,
Straw of Thy Crib and gold vesture for God,
Children may gaze on Thee, wide-eyed and wondering,
Angels may kiss where Thy Mother hath trod.

O Pearl of Paradise, Mary's Beloved One,
Stars were created to lead us to Thee.
Love hath its crowning, and sorrow its meaning,
All life its interpreting, Saviour, in Thee.

Feed us, Thy hungering ones, lighten our loneliness,
Bread for our being be, strength for our pain;
On Thy Babe Bosom lies all this world's weariness,
And, if it lead to Thee, all this world's gain.

His Appearing

> 'For while all things were in quiet silence, and that night was in the midst of her swift course, Thine Almighty Word leaped down from Heaven out of His Royal Throne.'
>
> Wisdom xviii.14

All in a mystery of moonlight,
With shimmer of Angels' wings,
Where silver lights and shadows blue,
And tenderest tints of heavenly hue,
Combine all wondrously; while rings
All Heaven with rapture at the holy sight;
Where one gold glow of love warms all the cave
So cold, for for the warmth of God's great Love,
And Mary bends over her darling Child,
And Heaven's summer cheers the wintry wild –
The Almighty Word leaped down from Heaven above,
In meekest mercy manifest to save.

Simplicities

Dear Lord, how should Thy people know
That Thou couldst stoop so very low
To lay Thy little baby head
Upon a straw-stuffed manger-bed,
Unless the angels first had come
To point the way to track Thee home
To little Bethlehem?

Else surely we had missed our way,
And all the world had gone astray,
And would be searching even now,
Still wondering, wondering where and how
To find Creation's mighty King,
Save shepherds had seen angels wing
Their way to Bethlehem.

Sweet Jesu, when I miss my road,
And seek some other sort of God,
Or search in complicated places,
Or gaze in intellectual faces,
Or try to puzzle, puzzle through,
Send me an angel who once flew
To little Bethlehem.

Oh, keep me simple, Saviour sweet,
And let me kiss Thy darling feet,
And sing to Thee my simple rhyme
With simple folk, this Christmas time,
While Mary there her needle plies,
And kind cows watch with curious eyes
The Babe of Bethlehem.

Magister Ubi Moraris?

Where shall we seek Him?
Where shall we find Him?
Desire of nations and Saviour of men,
Girdled with glory, where is He reigning?
Angels are singing
in Bethlehem.

Where shall we seek Him?
Where shall we find Him?
Question the Wise Men, journeying far,
To a Babe with a little Maid Mother to mind Him
Over the wilderness
leadeth the Star.

Where shall we seek Him?
Where shall we find Him?
Clothed in what wonder of meekness and love,
Food for His children, He comes to His Altar,
Stooping to reach us
from Heaven above.

Behold, Thy King Cometh Unto Thee Meek

In lowliness, long years ago,
Thou cam'st to men,
The golden straw, the silver snow,
Thy portion then.
But some could pierce their Lord's disguise,
The pure, the penitent had eyes
To see Thee then.

And Love with lowliness content,
To-day as then,
Here is the Blessed Sacrament,
Faith's Bethlehem –
Love, angel-led, hat skill to see
Though meekness veil Thy Majesty,
Thy diadem.

God's Ways

If wind and storm fulfil His word,
Who is their everlasting Lord,
It is not strange that one blest night
Should shine a star exceedingly bright
To lead three Kings upon their way
To Bethlehem, where Jesu lay,
All lowly, cradled in the hay –
Their journey's happy ending!

If winds might really angels be,
And 'flame of fire' give ministry,
It is not strange that shepherd men
Should see God's angels come again,
When winds were whispering round the ill
And camp-fires glowed, for nights were chill,
What time, to save us from all ill,
Came Jesus for our mending.

If God 'with finest flour of wheat'
Would give His hungry food to eat,
'Tis very like Him to content
Our souls with sweetest Sacrament.
Then early, early would I go,
By shine of stars and gleam of snow,
Where that kind Lord, Who stooped so low
Still at His alter I may know
To me in mercy bending.

Lux Vera

'Let there be light' Thou didst say.
It was done –
In the shining of stars, in the gold of the sun.
They tell of Thy handiwork, give Thee their praise,
Yet dark is the brightest and best of earth's days,
Without Thee, our Beloved.

'Let there be love,' didst Thou say?
It was done –
And Mary bent low, while the night, silver-hung,
Shone soft on Thy meek Baby face –
And bright is the darkest of nights by Thy grace,
And with Thee, best Beloved.

Ipse Est Enim Pax Nostra

Night brings her secret balm
And gives her rest
To tired limbs, and closes tired eyes.
And so He chose the night,
Who is our Rest,
To lie there in His straw-filled mange nest.
And that night's secret
Makes all darkness blest
To those who come to His great heart to rest:
Heart of all human hearts
The tenderest.

In Die Virtutis Tuar

Who should knock loudest, softest,
At God's door,
So that all Heaven's windows swiftly fill
As Angels throng each lattice more and more,
Listening, gazing into the night so still!
What sound so sets the House of God athrill?

All things keep quiet silence,
The swift course
Of mighty intermingling shining spheres
Poised by attractions, borne on tides of force,
More on as ever through the unnumbered years
Beneath God's gaze. What is it Heaven hears?

Lo from one little planet
Comes the cry
Of unbeginning Life now new begun,
And, shaping for Himself a destiny
As Son of Man, now appears on earth God's Son;
With man's own weapons must man's war be won!

As sacring bell to Heaven
Is that cry!
So the snow cloud of Angels softly come,
Dropping so swift to greet His Majesty,
Yea, men with Angels find themselves at home;
God's day hath dawned, Earth's day shall surely come!

Le Chef D'oeuvre De Dieu

O mind of God! How wonderful
That which Thy thought of beauty held
Of loveliness ineffable,
Whose infinite perfection filled
Even the measure of divine desire!
That incommunicable Word
That Thy love uttered and Thy Spirit heard.

How shall an artist share
His soul's dear dream?
Yet he will try, and litter of his floor,
Unfinished fragment, study, concept, scheme
Will tell the trial travails known before
There stood the statue of his fashioning,
The spoken word of his art's uttering.

Do the dim ages hold the mystery
Of Thy art's patience? Do the littered years
Of Love's long labours show the mastery
That must be e'er the finished work appears?
Lo, how the fruit of time interprets all!
Now is Thy Word made flesh, it hath sufficed
Thy Mind to see at last, at last, Thy Christ!

Thy Work, Thy perfect Work!
Dear God, what should it be?
A little Babe lapped in some stable straw,
Beauty that hurts for sheer simplicity!
Is earth a fitting setting for Thy gem
And couldst Thou trust our darkened eyes to see
The Vision of our God at Bethlehem?

Epiphany

A dim grey morn, and a rift of blue
One trembling star, so faint, so far,
One point of light just shining through.

And wrapped in Mary's robe of blue,
On all our race, One little Face,
Beloved, adored, just peeping through.

The star can tell of a distant sun,
That shines somewhere,
But the light of Mary's little One
Shines now and here.
For the light in heaven and earth are One
So near, so dear.

Heureux Noel

O Heaven must be a gladsome place,
God's Angels all a happy race;
See how they fly to Bethlehem
And bid the Shepherds come with them!
And this is all the Angels' glee,
That God has come for you and me
To be the Babe of Maid Marie;
So, Gentles, let us merry be
This happy Christmas morning!

God's Altar is a blithesome spot.
I'll thither wend me, well I wot,
All shriven clean, with soul washed white,
With Jesus there to one me quite,
And Angels, happy though they be,
Must kneel perforce and envy me.
Their very souls shall Bethlehem be,
Who take Him sacramentally,
This blessed Christmas morning!

The Virgin's Lullaby Lament

Jesu darling, do not cry,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Lo, Thy Mother kneeleth nigh,
Lullaby.
Hush Thee, hush Thee, pretty One,
Hush Thee, hush Thee, little One,
Lulla-lullaby.

Ah, such sleepless nights must come,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Not even stable cave for home,
Lullaby.
Hush Thee, hush Thee, pretty One,
Hush Thee, hush Thee, little One,
Lulla-lullaby.

Now Thou sleepest I may cry,
Lullaby, lullaby;
I must stand and see Thee die
On Calvary;
See Thee hang beneath God's sky
Helpless as Thou here dost lie
On Calvary, Calvary.

Christmas Communion

Thou Babe most dear,
Thou Babe divine,
Beneath these veils of Bread and Wine
I know Thee here.

Behold, I come
To worship Thee,
To take Thee in this Mystery
To have Thee home!

Thou, very God,
For love of me
From Bethlehem to Calvary
Love's paths hast trod.

Thou, very Man,
In humbleness
Didst learn obedience through distress –
And that I can.

Lord Jesu Christ,
As Thou to me,
So would I humbly come to Thee
In Eucharist.

Hidden Treasure

Children sometimes play a game
Known as 'Hidden Treasure.'
Through the ages just the same
Child minds have found pleasure.
'We are but little children weak' –
We love a game of 'Hide and Seek'!

Kind grown-ups the treasure hide
In intriguing places,
Leaving none-the-less for guide
Indicating traces.
Children love to search around,
But still the treasure must be found.

At Christmas-time God played that game,
Yet who would have been able,
But that the shining Angels came,
To find in a poor stable
The greatest Treasure of our race,
The Babe of Bethlehem's darling face.

Jesus Christ, The Same Yesterday, and Today, and For Ever

And just the same for you and me
He lives and loves as tenderly
Through years have passed away,
As when the simple shepherds saw
Their Saviour in the stable straw
On the first Christmas Day.

Here Ends

How Still The Night

The Christmas Poems Of Father Andrew

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