

Coming home for Christmas

Every year I come back to Christmas like a man returning home after a year away in a foreign land.

I know this place.

And I am pleased to be here. The pictures on the walls are familiar – like the people and the events in the Christmas story. I am enriched, comforted by the old things. But I see new things, and see the old things in new ways – I have changed, I am changing – we all do. Ideas surface, gleam and take flight.

Christmas, the Christmas that is not about the bubbly frenzy of all the preparations for the big day, still retains its shimmering mystery: ordinary people caught up in the divine drama that is the hinge of history. They are invited to take part, as we are; seeking, as we can; choosing, as we do; pressured, as we are; afraid, exhilarated, and, in the end, grateful, awed, content.

Here the poems, the illustrations, the reflections, and indeed the quotations from the original Biblical accounts which inspire them all, combine, we hope, to bring to life some of the myriad facets of the birth of the one who came to change our world, and us, and still does today.

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01

Gravity

Gravity

The apple, unlike Adam, had no choice but to fall,
Speeding to fulfil its Creator's call.
But what force drew him down to us?
He with a starlit infinity to explore,
He, who could peer into a neutron's core,
He who had spoken a thousand million times
And known the sulphuric spit of our self-vaunting crimes,
He, whom we had called murderer, liar, thief,
And left for dead with enlightened relief.

What force drew him down from above
To reap the grim harvest of rebel pride,
Hammered with nails of truth denied?
What force drew him down from above?
What force but this: the gravity of love.