



## CHRISTMAS CAROL

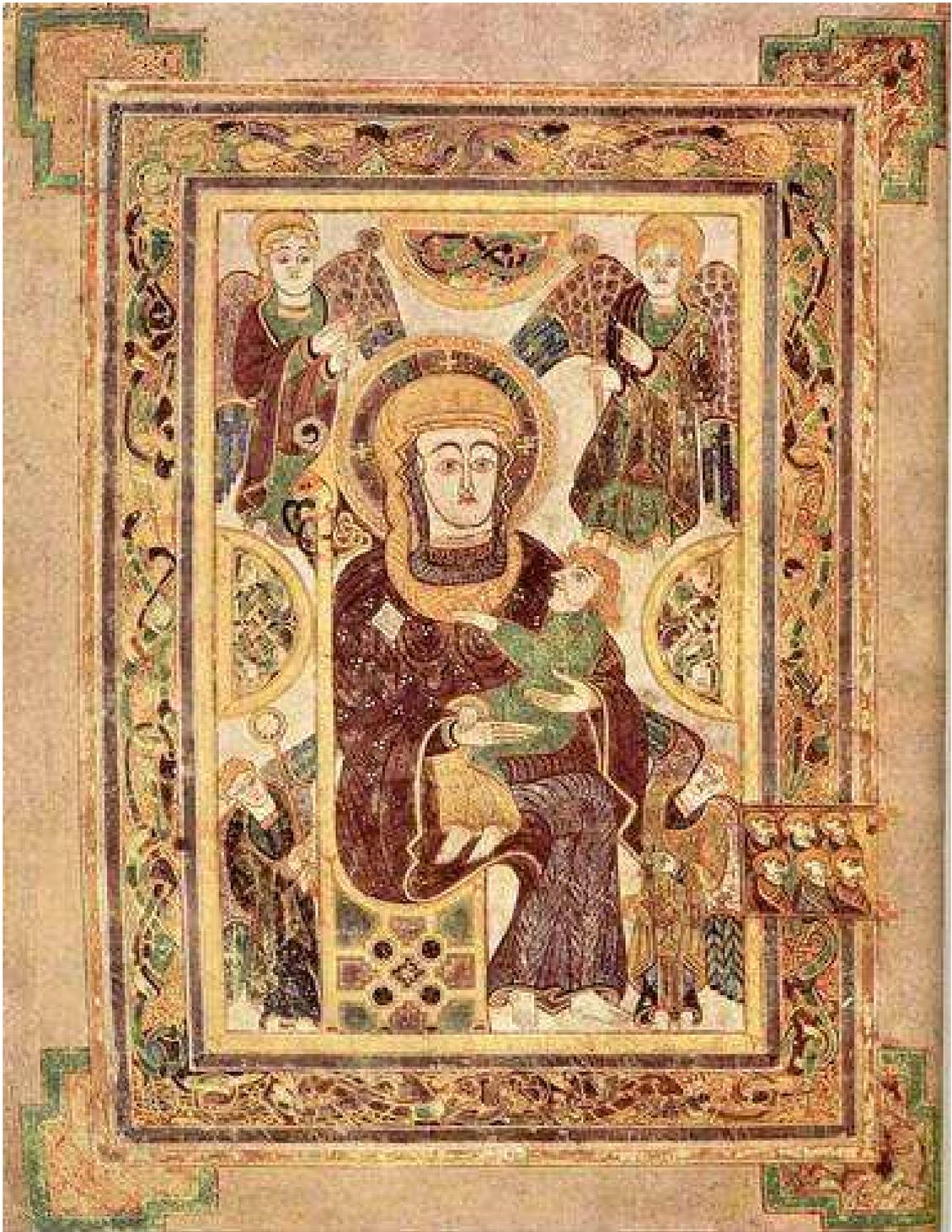
Twas a cauld cauld, nicht i the back o the year;  
The snaw lay deep, and the starns shone clear;  
And Mary kent that her time was near,  
As she cam to Bethlehem.  
When Joseph saw the toun sae thrang,  
Quo he: 'I houp I bena wrang,  
But I'm thinkin we'll find a place ere lang;'  
But there wasna nae room for them.

She quo, quo she: 'O Joseph loon,  
Rale tired am I, and wad fain lie doun.  
Is there no a bed i the hail o the toun?  
For farrer I canna gae.'  
At the ale-houss door she keekit ben,  
But there was sic a steer o fremmyit men,  
She thocht til hirsle: 'I dinna ken  
What me an my man can dae.'

And syne she spak: 'We'll hae to lie  
I the byre this nicht amang the kye  
And the cattle beass, for a body maun try  
To thole what needs maun be.'  
And there amang the strae and the corn,  
While the owsen mooed, her bairnie was born.  
O, wasna that a maist joyous morn  
For sinners like you and me?

For the bairn that was born that nicht i the staa  
Cam doon frae Heiven to tak awà  
Oor fecklessness, and bring us aa  
Safe hame in the hender-en.  
Lord, at this Yule-tide send us licht,  
Hae mercy on us and herd us richt.  
For the sake o the bairnie born that nicht,  
O, mak us better men!

**Alexander Gray**  
(1882 - 1968)



from the Book of Kells – early 9<sup>th</sup> cent.

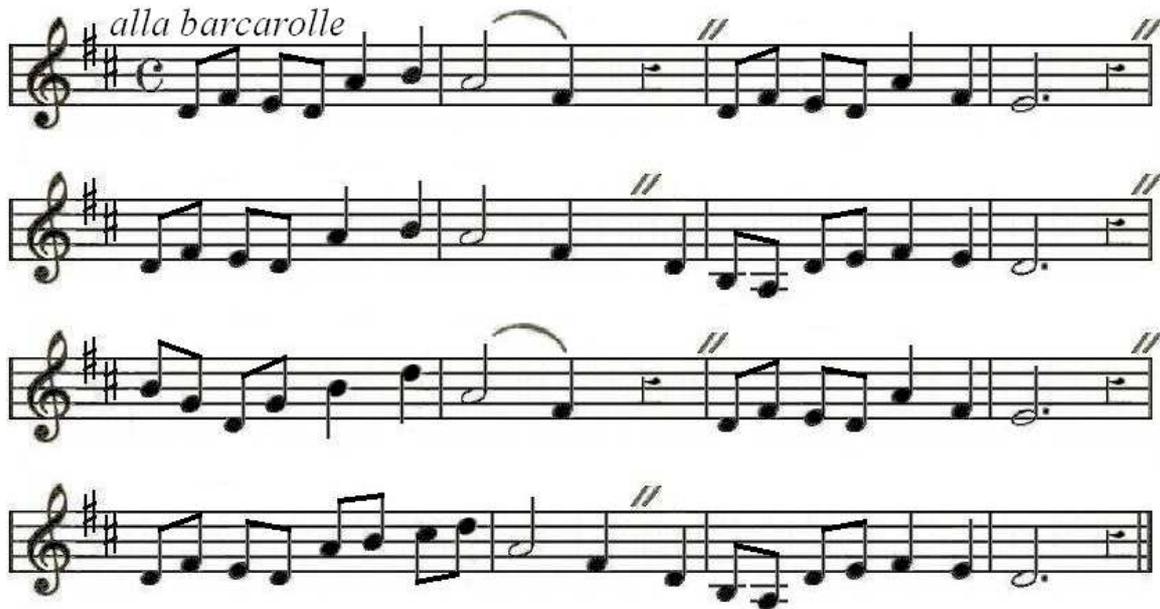
# Isaiah's Balulaloo o the Messiah

*The fowk that gaed lang i the gloam,  
Sic a bleeze o licht they hae seen;  
An wha woned i the deid-mirk holm,  
The licht it cums down on their een.*

(Isaiah 9. 2 - P. Hately Waddell)

THE CRAIDLE SANG

*J. Scott Skinner 1843 – 1927*



1 Our Bairn, he's bin born,  
Our Son, he's cum hame;  
Rule rests on his shouther,  
He's cryit by this name -  
Lord o Thochtie Redd,  
God o Pour an Micht,  
Time an Tide's Yae Faither,  
The Prince o Peace an Licht.

2 His gree, his braid peace  
Sal grow still an on,  
Stablihan an dichten  
His kinrik an his thron,  
Airtan it sae just,  
Graithan it sae fair,  
Rang, like Dauvit, richtan,  
Baith nou an ivermair.

Paraphrase o Isaiah 9.6-7,  
effer P. Hately Waddell,  
'Isaiah: frae Hebrew intil Scottis' (1879)

## THE THREE KINGS

There were three kings cam frae the East;  
They spiered in ilka clachan:  
'O which is the way to Bethlehem,  
My bairns, sae bonnily lachin?'

O neither young nor auld could tell;  
They traill'd till their feet were weary.  
They followed a bonny gowden starn,  
That shone in the lift sae cheery.

The starn stude ower the ale-house byre  
Whaur the stable gear was hingin.  
The owsen mooded, the bairnie grat,  
The kings begoud their singin.

**Alexander Gray**  
(1882 – 1968)



Adoration of the Magi – Andrea Mantegna c1500<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://freechristimages.org/biblestories/adoration\\_of\\_the\\_magi.htm](http://freechristimages.org/biblestories/adoration_of_the_magi.htm)

# IN THE BEGINNIN

A SCOTS NATIVITIE PLAY

bi

## Donald Smith

**SCRIPTAID series No: 5(b)**

**The Netherbow Arts Centre**

**43 High Street**

**Edinburgh**

**EH1 1SR**

**1994**

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The Netherbow, 43 High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1 SR

**For WURSHIP LEADER**

CHORUS - congregation/choir

*DRAMATIS PERSONAE*

**Outlan** (angel)

**Mary**

**Herod**

**Chaumerlain**

Wise Men - **Seer**  
**Seanachaidh**  
**Bard**

Herds - **John**  
**Elsie**  
**Karen**  
**Stewart**  
**Linda**  
**Auld Bob**  
**Shuggie**

**Hamish** (the dug)

## **PROLOGUE**

**Wurship Leader**

In the beginnin

**Congregation/choir**

In the beginnin is the licht  
Licht the dark canna smoor

**Leader**

Licht is Life

**Congregation/choir**

In the beginnin is the life  
Life at breathes in flesh an yird

**Leader**

Life an wurd

**Congregation/choir**

In the beginnin is the wurd that cam tae human kind

## **YIN**

*(Mary is sittin on a stool readin an bum-bummin til hersel. An eildit outlan enters, buskit for a jurnay).*

- Outlan** Can I come ben?
- Mary** *(risin)* Ye'r walcome, man. Will ye sit doon?
- Outlan** *(sittin)* Wi thanks, lassie.
- Mary** Hiv ye traivelt faur?
- Outlan** A lang road.
- Mary** Ye'll tak a bowl o' broth then? *(she pours him a bowl)*
- Outlan** *(takin the broth)* Ye'r verra kind. *(suppin)*  
Hae ye hard the sayin that them at gíes is blissed?
- Mary** *(lauchin)* For they will hae blissins in return. Gif ainly it war true!
- Outlan** Has life bin haurd on ye?
- Mary** On me? Na. I'm tae be mairriet soon.
- Outlan** Tae Joseph.
- Mary** Hoo div ye ken that?
- Outlan** Guid news traivels a lang road.  
*(The outlan finishes his broth an, gettin up, gies back the bowl)*  
An noo I'm here tae gíe ye a blissin.
- Mary** Whit div ye mean?
- Outlan** You will bear a son.
- Mary** Tae Joseph?
- Outlan** Na; o the Halie Spírit.
- Mary** *(risin)* Whit ar ye ettlin at?
- Outlan** Dinna be feart. God is wi ye, Mary. Your bairn will be oor deliverer.
- Mary** But hoo can this be?
- Outlan** God's weys is no oor weys, lassie. His promises winna fail.  
Fare ye weel.

*(He exits. She turns, raxes her buik, leuks at it, leuks efter the outlan, syne gaes doon on her knees while the congregation/choir speaks/sings.)*

<b>Mary</b> ( <i>as worship leader</i> )	Tell oot God's mighty acks!
<b>Congregation/choir</b>	Tell oot God's mighty acks Wha stoops tae lift the gentle hie Wha gies his kingdom tae the puir An fills the hungry wi guid things.
<b>Mary</b> ( <i>as worship leader</i> )	The Lord is wi us.
<b>Congregation/Choir</b>	The Lord is wi us, Mary; Tae you he gies a bairn, Tae us a saufin howp.
<b>Mary</b> ( <i>as worship leader</i> )	My saul glorifies the Lord, My hert is blythe in God my Sauviour. <sup>1</sup>

(*Mary exits.*)

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<sup>1</sup> For a singin version o the Sang o Mary see  
[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/3570/advent\\_sang\\_mary.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/3570/advent_sang_mary.pdf)

## **TWA**

*(Herod enters, talkin as he comes til his Chaumerlain)*

**Herod** Wise men, ye say. An whaur hae they sprung frae? No aroon here I wadna suppose.

**Chaumerlain** Na, your Majesty. They'r frae the faur North, the Hielans.

**Herod** That's a gey unceevilized kintra up there. Ar they Teuchters?

**Chaumerlain** They seem weel educate, your Majesty, an brawlie buskit.

**Herod** Weil, ye'd better show them in then.

*(The Chaumerlain ushers in the Wise Men)*

Come awa ben. Ye'r walcome tae the Coort o King Herod.

**Seer** *Your Majesty, we have travelled from the far North.*

**Herod** Aye, aye I ken. But whit fur?

**Seer** *For many generations we have studied the ancient scriptures and their prophecies.*

**Herod** Oh aye.

**Seanachaidh** *The ancient writings say, "But you, Bethlehem, in the Land of Judah, are by no means the least in Judah for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people."*

**Herod** There's ainly wan ruler here. I'm the Herd o' Israel.

**Seer** *Of course your Majesty, nobody's disputing your ... ..*

**Herod** I sud hope no, for the consequences micht be a wee thing serious.

**Bard** *Nonetheless, your Majesty, an unusual star has appeared in the night sky.*

**Seanachaidh** *And we have followed it here to your kingdom.*

**Seer** *In Bethlehem of Judah the star will rise, to shine in every corner of the earth.*

**Herod** Weel, weel, an wha exacklie did ye say ye war?

**Seer** *I am the Seer, reading the lessons of the past and peering into the future.*

**Seanachaidh** *I am the Seanachaidh, keeping alive the memory of past generations and the genealogies of our kings.*

**Bard** *I am the Bard, praising the heroes and lamenting those who have gone down the dark glen.*

**Herod** An that maks three wise men. A bairn born tae be king, ye say. Weel, dinna let me detain ye frae sic important business. On tae Bethlehem wi ye, but mind when ye finnd this bairn tae send me wurd sae's I can come an aa tae ... ay, tae pey ma respects. Ye'll mind that noo?

**Seer** *Of course, your Majesty, we will send you word.*

**Herod** Verra weel, guid day tae ye.

*(Herod exits, fallowit bi the chaumerlain. The Wise Men turn til the congregation.)*

**Seer (as wurship leader)** *We have seen a star shining in the sky.*

**Congregation/choir** We hae seen a starn  
an wiss tae fallow,  
but we hae monies the load tae bear,  
an monies the pad tae traivel.

**Seanachaidh** *Lighten our journey*

**Bard** *Straighten our path*

**Seer (as worship leader)** *We have seen a star shining in the sky*

*(The Wise Men exit doon aisles tae the back.)*

### **THREE**

*(The herds enter frae the side tae huddle roun their fire.)*

**John** It's sherp the nicht.

**Elsie** Leuk hoo bricht the starns ar.

**Karen** Millions o' them. Like a body cast a hantle o' gowd dust athort the lift.

**Stewart** Thon big starn's still thair tho. Clear as kin be.

**Karen** It seems to be hingin ower the toon.

**Linda** I dinna ken hoo yous yins can staund thair starin intae the lift. The broth's het noo. Come in roond the fire or ye'll freeze.

**Stewart** It's a bitter nicht!. I hope this disnae mean a cauld winter.

**John** We scarce hae eneuch tae see us throwe it agin this year. What wi Herod's lot, an the Romans, an e'en thae priests at the Temple, speirin their offerins.

**Stewart** We'll be killin the flock afore the winter's oot jist tae stay breathin.

**Auld Bob** (*mutterin*) Ye cannae.

**Linda** What's that, auld yin?

**Auld Bob** Ye cannae fell the beass. They're your ain flock.

**John** Whit's that supposed tae signifie?

**Karen** It's obvious, is it no. Wioot the yows, nae lambs. Wioot the lambs, nae future. We'll hae tae warstle throwe some wey.

**Elsie** Here, whaur's Shuggie?

**Stewart** I sent him up tae the fank. The wolves'll be oot the nicht.

**Elsie** He shuid hae bin back afore noo.

**John** You ken Shuggie. He's a chiel wi nae harns at the best o' times.

**Karen** Quaet! Listen! (*barkin*)

**Linda** Whit is it?

**Stewart** It's Hamish. Something's no richt.

**Elsie** He's comin nearer. He's rinnin. Goad help us. Whit's happened?

*(Shuggie breinges in doon the aisle, pechin. Excitit barkin).*

**John** Whit is it, Shuggie?

**Shuggie** I seen ... .. I hard ...

**Stewart** Tak your time, man. Whit happened?

**Shuggie** I saa an angel!

**John** Ye *whit!*

**Shuggie** An angel – abune the fauld. Aa gowden i the lift.

**John** Ye silly eejit. You've bin asleep up thair, hiv ye no? (*gie'n him a skyte on the lug*) Ye'd hae frozen tae death.

**Karen** Lea him alane, John. Hear him oot.

**Shuggie** He pointed tae the starn shínin abune Bethlehem.

**Elsie** There is a starn.

**Shuggie** He said ... .. he said a sauviour wud be born thair the nicht.

**Stewart** But that's the clash in the toon. A bairn will be born til the Hoose o' Dauvit an chuck oot Herod an the Romans.

**Shuggie** Naw, a Prince ...

**Stewart** Thair ye ar then, a Prince.

**Shuggie** ... o' Peace.

**John** Dinna be daft. Dauvit's line díed oot lang syne or else they'r crofters noo, like us. The laddie's been listenin tae ower monie clishmaclavers at the mercat.

**Auld Bob** (*mutterin*) That's the hale drift.

**Karen** Whit ar ye sayin, Bob?

**Auld Bob** Dauvid wis a herd laddie himsel, afore he wis iver a king.

**Elsie** He's richt. We maun gang tae Bethlehem the nicht.

**Linda** An finnd this bairn?

**Karen** John an auld Bob can bide wi the sheep.

**John** That'll dae me fine.

**Stewart** Whit's Hamish barkin at noo?

**Shuggie** Leuk, the lift! I telt ye.

**Elsie** It's bleezin.

**Karen** Aa gowden.

**Auld Bob** It's Shuggie's angels!

**John** Weel, whit ar ye bidin on? Quick, tae Bethlehem!

*(The herds muve aff in excitement tae the side, leain auld Bob)*

**Bob (as wurship leader)** We hae seen the glorie.

**Congregation/choir** We hae seen the glorie  
in heichest heiven  
An peace on yird  
Guidwill tae them that seeks the guid.

**Bob (as wurship leader)** Tidins o gryte joy

**Congregation/choir** Tidins o gryte joy we bring  
This day in Dauvit's toon  
A sauviour's born  
An he is cryit Christ the Lord.  
Ye'll find the bairnie rowed in swaddlin claihs  
An lvin in a troch.

*(Bob stauns tae yin side an watches as Mary enters wi the babbie cairriein. She muves tae the maunger, fallwit bi Joseph. She shaws Joseph the babbie, syne lays it i the maunger. The herds gaither roun. A short hyme or carrell is sung, e.g. 'The Herd's Sang')*

- 1 Luik thou, my hert, behaud an see;  
What's liggin intil yon cribbie?  
What babbie's yon, sae guid an fair?  
At's my wee darlin Jesus thair!
- 2 Ah, Lord! at med aa cre-ature,  
O hou art thou becum sae puir,  
At thou upo thon hay will lie,  
The feed o ass an clartie kye?
- 3 The silk an sander thee til aise  
Ar fell course hay an sweillin claes,  
Whaurin thou glories, grytest King,  
As thou in heiven war in thy ring.
- 4 Ah, my dear hert, wee Jesus, hush!  
Mak thee a beddie saft an sprush,  
An I sall rock thee i my hert;  
I'll nane lat thee my thochts depert.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/3579/christmas\\_herd\\_sang.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/3579/christmas_herd_sang.pdf)



## **EPILOGUE**

*(The apenin litany is repeated.)*

<b>Wurship Leader</b>	In the beginnin
<b>Congregation/choir</b>	In the beginnin is the licht Licht the dark canna smoor
<b>Leader</b>	Licht is Life
<b>Congregation/choir</b>	In the beginnin is the life Life that breathes in flesh an yird
<b>Leader</b>	Life an wurd
<b>Congregation/choir</b>	In the beginnin is the wurd that cam tae human kind
<b>Aa</b>	Amen

## **FIVE READINGS FRAE THE AULD TESTAMENT FOR A CARRELL SERVICE**

din intil Scots bi **David Ogston** (1945 - 2008)

### **ISAIAH 9, vs. 2,3**

Them that traivelled in mirk, they hae seen a gryte licht: them that wis sair made i the howe-dumb-deid, on them his licht cam doon.  
Thou's made o them a growthie nation: thou's gien them a wheen o gledness; they gulravage afore ye like clyack hid come; like men faain tee ower a cairt-load o spulyie.

### **ISAIAH Chapter 9, verses 6,7**

For tae hiz a bairn his come: tae hiz a bairn is gien: an the wecht o rule wull faa on his shooders: an He wull be cryit, 'Winnerfu Coonsellor, God o Micht, Faither Ivverlaistin, Prince o Peace.'

His rule an His peace sall nivver devaul on Dauvit's throne, an ower His Kingdom, tae bigg it on foons ayont aa chynge; tae haud it ticht an siccar wie justice an gweedness fae this day on, till time's aa deen wi. The eident virr o the Lord o Hosts will faisten this.

### **ISAIAH Chapter 11, verses 1-4a,6**

Up frae the reets o Jesse sall come up a sooker, green life.  
An the Speerit o the Lord sall mak its hame in Him - the Wyce Spirit, the Mensefu Speerit, the Speerit o LORE an MICHT, the Speerit o Kennin, the fear o the Lord.  
Nae ither thing wull He set His hert on bit the fear o the Lord.  
He winna gyang bi the tales His een tell: nae mair than He'll pey muckle heed tae the dirl o His lugs: bit soothfast an aqual an aefauld wull aye be His wye wie the peer, His wye wie the sober an dowie.  
Wolf an lamb thegither, leopard an kid, they'll coorie doon side bi side: the calf an the lion an the yearlin stirk wull a alike faa douce intae step ahin the Bairn at the heid o them.

### **ISAIAH Chapter 60, verses 1-5a**

Rise! be bricht! your licht his come! an the glorie o God his brocht ye the daw.  
For mark ye, the yird wull be smored in nicht, an sae wull the face o clay: bit the Lord wull come an be mornin licht tae ye, an His glorie wull rax tae aabodie, een an aa.  
An nations sall come tae yer licht, an kings tae yer bricht an blythe arisin.  
Lift up yer heids - look roon aboot ye - they gaither tae you, they come aathegither.  
Your sons wull come frae hine awa, an your dothers tee, rowed in the airms that cairry them.  
Syne you wull see, your faces wull glister - your hert wull be lichtsomen an lippin-fou.

### **MICAH Chapter 5, verses 2-4**

As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, for aa that ye'r juist a wee smout amon aa the clans o Judah: oot o you wull come ANE tae tak Israel in haund, ANE frae lang back, ANE auld as time itsel.

God wull staund by tull the quine his her bairn: syne them that ar ootlins, brithers o His, wull come back tae the fowk o Israel.

An he wull staund up an hansel His flock wi gweed things i the pooer o the Lord, in the name abeen aa names, the Name o the Lord His God.

An they wull bide weel-hained, for noo he wull be gryte tae the faar, braid mairches o the yird.

# Yule-tide



By **Rev. D. Gibb Mitchell**

(1861 - 1921)

Editted an abridged for the  
*Scots Language in Worship Group*  
2009

# YULE-TIDE

Lang sheddas sklentit doun on hame an haa. The sun bored his hinmaist rays throwe the mist at hung on the hill, an spread his plaid o the gloamin licht ower the sâcred land. The hush o the burn raise til the clachan as it bickered by, like a hyme at the nichtfaa in praise o the day at wis gane.

The mire mirk hung ower the warld. The wuds war cauld an bare. Ilka tree wis rifled o its galore. The gerss wis gray an nithert. The bleatin yowes on the far brae face scurried hame til the buchts for the nicht. The last echoes o the bairns' mirth war floatin awà throwe the glacks o the hills.

Ilka fire wis bleezin bricht, an the yule logs flung their sparks on the flair, an the lum raired loud wi the dancin lowe.

The simmer's wark wis by, the thrang o the hairst wis past. Ilka barn wis packit weel. Nature's haun hed bin fou an scailin. The guidman's haire wis blythe an merry. Nae want, nae care. The saison hed keepit its tryst wi him, an haundit him doun meikle store.

It wis the sort o nicht whan fowk wud thank God for his guidness, an bide his blissin. A nicht whan the ee wad wanner heivenwart an steal a luik ayont the blae intae the Halie Plece.

It wis a nicht at titched the pâthos an the haire o a body, an swung him back intae by-gane times whan Jehovah hed trysted wi his faithers. Memory trailed back the rod o promise, an reenged ahint the cruiks an thraws, eident tae trace the tramp-marks o God's purpose.

Unco the sights he saa - the gryte Aamichtie comin doun an broodin ower an haudin grip o his ain fowk. He saa a God at his face wis turned til the yirth, at his ee wis ey on fowk's richt an wrang; ane at mixed i the stramash o fowk's daeins, an grippit the threids o human action an warped them intil his ain loom.

Grand jist it wis tae staun an listen tae the click o the gryte divine shuttle, an hear the whirr of the sâcred wheel, an the whoop o the threids as they cam thegither - a strange crimpson streak twined an twistit throwe aa the wob.

The rod wis lang an dreich, an harnpans, ay an corps at lay on the wey telt o monie a brulzie an monie a sair fecht: the warslins o will hairts ettlin the richt rod tae gang - tryin tae fallow the track whaur Providence hed glimmered his licht. Whiles a backart mairch intae the mirk, whan they tint their gate for the want o yin at kent the wey; an forrit again wi a sang an a gallop whan the richt seer spak Jehovah's wull.

In their saul wis a dream; they greened for something they kentna what. Like starns at shot throwe the dirk, gryte yins shot out frae the lave an shoutit the cry at wis needit. Ilka ane at comes on til his day cairries forrit the cry, an a hecht at maun come true.

A tear stole ower his ee as he thocht o the days gane by. "We hae nae sang on our toung, nae joy in our haire, nae gleam i the ee. Nae mirth, nae pleasure rings throwe the land." He saa gryte hosts tramp by - the rise an faa of bygane glories - nâtions hurlt tae the fit o the hill, an melled intil the grund, aa their micht an their pride dumfoonert an duntit an braken tae bits.

The souch o the wind cam til his ear as he wannert ower the lanelie hills o Judah, an trudged bi the dowie

hauchs o Jordan. His hairt stounded wi grief, "My fowk's din. Their glore's by wi. There's nae prophet, nae priest, nae king. The auld harp lies by, therms aa wizzent an fustit; nae peg stauns ticht in its plece; the music is out an the tune is gane at Jehovah wis yaised wi."

The sun sent the hinmaist sheddass athort the land as he sank doun ower the braken hills, lea'n the auld warld for iver. The nicht wis fraucht wi mystery. Quate brooded solemn ower aa. The efter glow hung lang on the hills. It bathed their crests wi a gowden licht, an ran ower their shouthers, an trickled doun til it met the nicht i the howes. The vast blae sea o the welkin wis shiverin an agitate. Here an thair a star peepit throwe timrouslie, gin they wad hae leave tae shine. The yirth reponed wi a kindly walcome, an beckoned them doun throwe the faulds o the nicht. Yirth an lift seemed tae crack thegither, the stars souchin saft ower heicht an howe, sootherin the yirth wi their titch.

The wannerer awoke tae the mood o the nicht, an fand an unco gaun on atween heiven an yirth. Heiven wis laich doun, an as near as cud whisper a saicret til't. An a list'nin humour at lay ower the land gart him hearken along wi't tae get the threid o the passin tryst.

He sat aneth a cedar, bummin the sang o the Captivitie. He hard the tramp o the passers-by as they trudged the rod at the fit o the hill. A ying maiden, sittin a cuddie, neiboured bi her man, gaed by, an antered out o sicht along the Bethlehem rod. The fowk thringed doun frae aa airts at the biddin o the haun at held the sceptre; aa the clan o Dauvit forgethered i the wee toun. The place wis asteer in iv'ry neuk an back court. Ilka houss an hovel wis taen. The first

tae come war best sered, the hinmaist got the warst farin.

Joseph, an Mary on the cuddy, cam til the inn an socht bield for the nicht. A stable wis aa they cud get. The din o the toun quaitened doun tae rest frae its hammerin souch, the eerie nicht cam ower the streets, an silence claimed the plece.

**There's nichts at hes hallowed memories twined about them - nichts at aabodie's mind traivels back til. This nicht wis the maist oncommon o aa the nichts at hed gane. The haun o Providence wis fou o his biggest gift, an this nicht he wad pass it ower tae mankind.**

Heiven wis waitin, wheeshtit an still, an ilka starnie at blinkit throwe the blae abune seemed tae focus on the wee toun o Bethlehem. The herds out on the hill fendin their hirsle thocht the augurs war bodin, an wunnered at the nicht-faa what Jehovah hed tae divulge. Whiles they crackit about ancient days as they dandered on the braes. The faithers hed visions frae the Aamichtie, an angels caa'd doun til this warld langsyne. Hed the angels bang'd out o sicht an closed heiven's curtains for iver? Hed they striven wi our forbears an left the yirth til itsel - ill-taen wi its wrangs an feckless wamble?

While they mused like this a bricht bruch o licht wis shinin aa roun, an a divine figure drew near them. As the winds o October shiver the ash leaf, they trimt at the voice o the angel tounge: "Fear nocht. I'm bringin ye gude news o meikle gledness. It's for aabodie. For een tae you an aa fowk a sauviour is born this verra day i Dauvit's Toun, Christ, the Lord! An this'll be arles til ye: ye'll fin the bairnie rowed in a barrie-coat, lyin in a maunger." An as they



gazed intil the starry lift they hard, like whispers frae afar, souns o a heivenlie host. An the wurds at fell on their ears frae the far-aff lilt soundit like "Glore ... Peace ... Airth ... Guidwull ... Man." The sky seemed tae apen up, an the gryte hosts o heiven drappit throwe the rift, singin the sang o angels' guidwull, an heraldin the advent i the little toun - the staa wi the wee bairn at wis born.

It wis an unco sicht for a bodie tae see in a warld like this: heiven's glorie comin doun tae the laichs, an a band o angels laudin i the mids o the glorie. The herds cudna bide the grandeur o't. They war fley't tae meet the onkent warld whan it cam i the garb o an angel host. But the dreid at first fleggitt their hairts wis sune past. The music wis sweet, an the wurds winnin, an belyve the beautie wiled their hairts back tae guid faith. Their likin grew strang as they listened the message o joy: a Sauviour wis gien tae the warld frae God. "Glorie tae God i the heichest heichts, an on the yirth, guidwull tae man."

The angels gaed awà ahint the curtains o the nicht, an stole their weys back hame.

The herds war fou o gleefu crack. They war brimmin ower wi happiness. Their faces beamed i the dirk, as if the angels hed left their glorie wi them. As they trampit across the fields they war proud at hairt acause God hed lippent them wi the news, an trustit them as leal men.

They war aiblins God-fearin at waited for news like this. They thocht the time hed come whan the by-gane hechts micht be fulfilled. They kent the days war lang gane sin God hed sent his messengers tae the warld, an nocht hed bin hard o him for hunners o ears. The hairt o their kintramen wis wearied out waitin sair the comin back o

Jehovah's wurd. Whaur hed God gane frae his ain fowk?

The fremmit haun held the swird ower their heid. Dool an wae depressed them aa. Their hairts wudna rise til the thocht o their God. They hedna freedom tae caa him their ain. The sangs o Dauvid war nae mair hard, an the dirgie o the saum wis lossit.

God's hosts hed come doun aince mair. The lang doverin age wis wauken wi a sang, an heiven itsel cam back til the warld again.

The bonnie wee bairnie, wi its blythesome face, lay helpless in a stirkie's staa. Strange hou heiven wis pleased tae pit it thair, an no in a palace buskit an braw. Nane jaloused he wud come like this. Nor nane wud think tae look for him i sicna plece. In this wafflin stable i Bethlehem God's grytest gift lies i the lawliest heck - as if born bi chance, thrown in upò the warld wi'out a foreplan - as if ravellt fate grippit his destiny, an chance an mischanter deceived him. Nae blithemeat ready for him, awà frae hame, doun i the cauld stable - comfortless; nae saft or cosie cradle, nae couthie or kindlie surroundins - as if he wisna God's bairn avà.

The wind souched throwe the rafters, an played wi the strae. The stars glentit in throwe the riggin, an blinkit at the bonnie wean, an sang til theirsels as they saa him thair - the cantie wee cratur. Strange at heiven wis taen up wi this, at the angel hosts sang their joy about it. Strange at the universe wis waitin for't, an the weirds o the nicht soundit forth at the langed-for Visitant hed come. Strange at the herds war wannerin here seekin the door whaur God hed plected his Child - in a neuk like this, in a battered auld biggin, the Bairn o Promise hed come.

Inquirin faces peer in at the door an speir for the bairn they'r seekin. A glance roun at the plece is aa they need. They ken they ar richt, an the herds stap quate in-by. They ar blythe, bot serious an eager wi joy. They feel at their errand is sâcred. They hed hard ower muckle an seen ower muckle this nicht tae be licht-hairtit. Their muid's wi the ee-sweet bairn.

They bend eident out-ower the bairnie. They luik for something mair nor naitur's common gift. They see a child at a king or a cottar micht be proud o - bot nocht mair. Aa thing is jist what naitur sud be - like their ain wee toddlers at hame.

Whit dis this mean? Is there nocht mair tae see? Can this be the end o our jurnay? Ar we, efter aa, at the richt plece? Is this what hes bracken the silences an stirred up the weirds o the nicht, an sent aa the stars sic a dancin, an the reid licht's faa on the hills an the glimmer o the sky as the sun gaed doun? Is this what rave the heivens in twa, an at aa the angels cam doun about? Is this the pith o the sang, in life - the sang o peace an guidwull an joy at sweepit the braes o Bethlehem? Is it here whaur aa the streams o human desire war tae meet? Is it here whaur aa the tides o the past flowed for? Wis it for this at aa the human agony an passion an howp an dreams war spent? Is this the crimpson streak i the wob o God's weavin? Hae the visions an symbols o the will an rugged past met aneth the shedda o the stable staa at Bethlehem?

The mystery is here: Nature's biggest ferlie - God's fouest haunfu - the warld's michtiest blissin - Heiven's grytest sacrifice.

Aa at cam tae see him left their blissin, an nane thocht him wrang. Amang the lave war wise men frae the East at hed bin bambaized bi the strangeness o the heivens. They war at hame i the sky. They prowled throwe the welkin an pried intil its ferlies. They knet ilka blink o its omens an lippeden on its forebodins. They tuik the gate bi the licht o a star, an footit the onkent rod in search o its secret.

The world's day wis ready for the bairn, an nou he wis i the mids o its whirl. Heiven wis ower faur awà for fowk. They cudna rax tae God. Yit God ettled tae get nearer fowk, nearer nor he hed iver bin - tae leuk intil their face wi human een, tae speak wi a human tounge, tae grip their haun wi a human grip, an be as near til's as we ar ane til anither. Syne tae mak fríens wi us he pits the Bairn's haun intil our luif. He lippens his Son til us at we may ken his hairt.

The world afore hed staned the prophets an blattert the seers at spak for God. But nou thir byganes is byganes. In the Bairnie i the maunger humanitie is seen perfeck. Création is redeemit. An God delytes in it.

The sang o peace an guidwull wis liltit ower an ower again as heiven's hosts saa lauchter an likin brocht back til's. The joy o the first Yule-tide begude in heiven: but on airth we can aa sing nou the sang at wis sung bi the angels:-

*"Glorie tae God i the heighest heichts,  
an on airth peace! Guidwull tae man."*

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(The hail sermon wis first publishit in 1910 i "*Sermons in Braid Scots*" - online at [http://www.scotstext.org/makars/d\\_gibb\\_mitchell](http://www.scotstext.org/makars/d_gibb_mitchell) )