

Glory to God – in Your Street – and Mine! A Christmas Meditation

It was 1974. I was Minister of the Dewsbury Road Church of the Nazarene in Leeds and two days before Christmas I was driving through the city, making some pastoral calls.

It was late afternoon and getting dark. All the lights were coming on in Leeds, from the usual street lighting to the illuminated Christmas trees, fairy lights and all the flashing, coloured neon signs along the streets and in the shops. Heading for the city centre, I drove into the Headrow and there in front of me was Leeds' largest store, Schofields. It was a very prestigious shop with five large display windows. All the windows that December evening were bright with Christmas goods and twinkling lights.

But there was something more than just sparkling decorations in Schofield's windows. There was a Bible text displayed! Yes, right along all five of the windows were the words from Luke 2:14, 'GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST.' Each letter was at least three feet high and they were hung inside, across the five windows, to spell out the words of the angel on that first Christmas night in Bethlehem, long, long ago.

The text in Schofield's store, however, actually read a little differently. What I saw was startling. One of the letters, the 'E' from the word 'HIGHEST,' must have lost its support for it had dropped down. Now the words read, 'GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGH ST.'

What a text! God's glory in the High Street! – in the Headrow in Leeds! I thought about that all the way home, and the more I meditated on it, I thought how right it was. Yes, that's what Christmas really means! God came into our world! The Saviour of the world was not born in a grand palace, or a five-star hotel, but in a cattle shed in a street in Bethlehem. The Lord of the universe came into the world He had made by the back door.

That evening experience in the Headrow in Leeds twenty-nine years ago was very special to me. Glory to God in the High St! And why not? That's exactly what Christmas means. God came into our world on that first Christmas night and 'glory shone around.'

But, and this is the truly wonderful news, His glory was not confined to Bethlehem. It was meant for the entire world. It was meant for Leeds and for Lahore; for Birmingham and for Budapest; for Manchester and for Marrakech; for the whole wide world. The Bible text in Schofield's windows lost nothing by dropping the letter 'E'. It preached a great truth that never changes. Glory to God in the High St! and in the side street, and in the back street – and in your street, and in mine!

*by the Revd Dr Herbert McGonigle,
former Principal of Nazarene Theological College, Manchester*

**It is easier to renounce worldly possessions
than it is to renounce the love of them.**

Walter Hilton