

HISTORY: WHAT CHILD IS THIS

Tuesday, December 2

Reading: Isaiah 9:1-7

Isaiah 9:6 *For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given,*

William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898) was a businessman in Glasgow Scotland, but he had a poet's heart. He wrote many poems during his lifetime. At age 29, Dix suffered a months-long period of severe sickness that left him bedridden. During this time, he thought much about his faith and many of his religious poems came from this re-evaluation of his life.

Though written in 1865, 'What Child is This' was not published until 1871. It was at this time that his words were paired with an old popular folk tune written almost 300 years earlier. 'Greensleeves' was a bitter romantic song about a man who was rejected by the woman he loves.

Alas my love you do me wrong
To cast me off discourteously
For I have loved you so long
Delighting in your company

The haunting melody, popular at bars and festivals, fit perfectly with Dix's words and the tune and poem have been sung together ever since.

'What Child is This?' is a meditation on the birth of Jesus. He begins each verse with a question and concludes with the answer. It contemplates the mystery of the birth of God the Son into the world.

We have become so familiar with the Christmas story that we have lost the wonder and mystery of this important event. The birth of Jesus should fill our minds with questions and our hearts with wonder at the fact that God became a Man.

About 700 years before the coming of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah wrote about this great mystery: that the "Child born" and the "Son given" is the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" and ultimate King. Isaiah began this prophecy with wonder.

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2)

As we look at the glimmering lights that dominate the Christmas season, let us remember the greatest light - the Christ Child born to be "the light of the world." Make this Christmas a celebration filled with awe and wonder!