



"He prayeth well, who loveth well both man and bird and beast. He prayeth best, who loveth best all things both great and small; For the dear God who loveth us, He made and loveth all."
—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1798

THE COMPASSIONATE SPIRIT

As we look forward to Christmas, our anticipation is tied into material things – holly and parties and gifts – and, for many of us, only for a moment will we consider the reason behind the celebration. Fewer still will consider the message.

Is the message of the Christ Child so difficult and clever that only trained theologians can discover and interpret it?

Or is it as clear and indisputable as the resolute cry of that newborn?

Humans have written history, literally, for themselves. It was not written to sustain and preserve the legacy of the passenger pigeon, the diminutive Mount Graham squirrel or the endangered Key deer. We write their history as well, sometimes with their extinction, but we don't credit them with any existence apart from our own.

The human language and our written history – neither of which is incorruptible – have always served human needs and human ends. Our customs and beliefs continue to be shaped by the shadows of other fallible humans, their words grown sacrosanct over time.

It is not enough that humans disregard other forms of life in shaping and writing history – even within our own species different religions interpret history in contempt of other beliefs.

There can be only one true history of all life on earth, and it will not be written by a human, although it may be perceived by the human heart, for the heart is always singular; it feels without reference and speaks without quotation, which is why revolutions of spirit and mind are still possible.

The human heart understands that the message of Christmas is love, and love unconditional and for all creation. When the immutable message of

Christmas becomes clear, love unrestricted by creed or species fills one's life and swells one's spirit.

A compassionate spirit sees all beings equally and would no more turn away from a beggar than a prince, or a sparrow than an eagle. We are all creatures whose lives are determined by necessity.

Words are our history, but they are shaped by our actions and, for that reason, the message of Christmas will never be lost so long as it is lived and so long as there are humans unafraid to challenge custom on the basis of what they feel to be right.

It is well for humans to remember that creation is only a mystery to us. The more we learn about the unity of life, the more we understand that nothing exists without reason. Samuel Taylor Coleridge must have glimpsed the Creator's love for his creation when he wrote:



*"The... Spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow."*

You have the power to change history. You and I, together, can determine that starting here, starting now, no being whose needs become known to us will go untouched. There can be no offense in a noble attempt, only in refusing to try.

There will always be those who disparage quests of the heart; they are to be pitied, not hated, for what they refuse to give, they can never receive.

As long as there is life, the message of the Christ Child will be passed on to others who will listen and understand and in turn proclaim the love that is the first commandment, and the greatest gift.

—Yvonne Wallace Blanc

