

CHRISTMAS AND CAROLS

Do you have a morning ritual? Perhaps its coffee, maybe it includes quiet time of prayer and Bible study. It might just be brushing your teeth and taking a shower. Maybe you review emails from the night before or head out for early morning exercise.

I build several things into my morning ritual. I'm not big on coffee, but I do like quiet time with the Lord each morning. I strongly recommend making a pattern of saying the Lord's Prayer at the start of each day. After spending some devoted time with God, I typically will check emails, and the Internet to see if the world blew up while I was sleeping.

Another part of my daily ritual is to read seven comic strips. One of my favorites is Jim Meddick's Monty. Monty is a nerdy fellow unlucky in love and life, yet brimming with self-consciousness. His sidekick is a cyborg named EB3. Now this may not sound funny, but trust me, it is! It is a comic strip equivalent to *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

December 14, 2016 began a series where Monty goes caroling.



By December 16 we have:



Have you ever gone caroling? If forced to define a “carol,” could you?

Christmas carols are some of our favorites Christmas traditions, and since this is our Christmas class, we will build it off of some carols we know and love.

WHAT IS A “CHRISTMAS CAROL”?

The Oxford English Dictionary gives the primary meaning of a “carol” as a “ring dance,” and thus it becomes secondarily, “a song; originally, that to which they danced.”¹ As a dancing song, the *OED* adds that it is typically of a “joyous strain,” and when of a religious nature, is “a song or hymn of religious joy.”

Accordingly, it is not surprising to read in older writings of carols, more emphasis and recognition of these purer elements. In 1928, Oxford published *The Oxford Book of Carols*. There the definition was more fully given.

Carols are songs with a religious impulse that are simple, hilarious, popular, and modern... They vary a good deal: some are narrative, some dramatic, some personal, a few are secular; and there are some which do not possess all the typical characteristics.²

Fast-forwarding nearly a century from 1928, “hilarity” is not something we typically associate with carols, but the association with fun and dance is not far under the surface. We hear it in the melodies, and can find it in many of the words. Even in carols of seriousness, we should find the truths of life that bring joy to the heart causing, at the least, internal dancing!

Serious Christian thought, and the seriousness of the incarnation, should never be perceived so superficially as to be devoid of joy. I am always saddened to hear Billy Joel’s song, *Only the Good Die Young* because his theme is based on the idea that anyone of faith is automatically missing out on life’s joys. He’d “rather laugh with the sinners than die with the saints. Sinners have much more fun.” That is sad and inaccurate! Paul wrote over and over of joy we have in the Lord. It is the second fruit of the Spirit, right after love (Gal. 5:22).

So as we look at Christmas through caroling, we look at joy, and fittingly begin with *Joy to the World!*

¹ *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford 1989), 2nd ed., vol. 2 at 907.

² Dearmer, Percy, *et al.*, *The Oxford Book of Carols* (Oxford 1928), at v.

Joy to the World! the Lord Is Come 146

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Ps. 98:4

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come; let earth re-
 2. Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns; let all their
 3. No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in -
 4. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the

ceive her King; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,
 songs em - ploy; while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his right - eous - ness,

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his
 (1.) and heaven and na - ture sing,

(1.) and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.
 heaven and na - ture sing,

WORDS: Isaac Watts, 1719; para. of Psalm 98
 MUSIC: Lowell Mason, 1848; based on G. F. Handel, 1742

ANTIOCH
 C.M.Repeats

It might surprise many that *Joy to the World* was not written to be a Christmas carol. While it is arguably the most popular one sung in the last 100 years, Isaac Watts wrote the lyrics in the early 1700's to speak to Christ's triumphant return to earth in his second coming, not his first! It was a Christian re-write of Psalm 98.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth... before the LORD, for he comes (Ps. 98:4,9).

The song was put to a melody often attributed to Handel, but that attribution is also challenged.

The song is quite fitting as a Christmas celebration because the second coming of Christ is only victorious because of his first coming. We can see both the first and second coming as bookends to the salvation reality for us humans. It is likely because of a view to the second coming of Christ, that the early church didn't celebrate Christmas or Christ's birth.

You can scour the New Testament from Matthew chapter 1 to Revelation chapter 22, and you will find no indication whatsoever of the date that Jesus was born. While there are two accounts of the birth of Jesus (Matthew & Luke), neither of those accounts give any indication that the birth occurred on December 25th. The New Testament gives no indication that the early church celebrated the birth of Christ on any special day.³ In fact, Paul makes no reference in all of his writings to the birth of Christ, nor do other New Testament writers beyond Matthew and Luke. In Luke's history of the church (the book of Acts), he also does not make any reference to the church celebrating Christ's birth.

As a modern church, we celebrate the birth of Christ, but never as our sole focus (pun intended). We know that his birth and his second coming are two events that pivot around his crucifixion and resurrection. That gospel message of Christ paying the price for our sins, infuses joy at the Christmas celebration, and joyful confidence in the second coming.

So, sing *Joy to the World*. Sing it twice. Once with an eye toward the first coming of the Savior, and once with an eye toward his second coming. You will see the beauty of its claims in both.

Both the first and second comings of Christ are centered on the message that God and sinners are reconciled, as we sing *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*.

³ In fact, some dispute whether the New Testament church celebrated any day as more special than another. There are indications that the Lord's Day (Sunday) was marked as special (1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). Beyond that, Paul writes in Romans that, "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike." What those days were, however, Paul does not say.

106 Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

And suddenly there was . . . a multitude of the heavenly host praising God . . . Luke 2:13

MEDELSSOHN 7 7 7 7 D. Ref.

Felix Mendelssohn, 1840

Arr. by William H. Cummings, 1856

Charles Wesley, 1739

1. Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born King:
 2. Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored; Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord!
 3. Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Right-eous-ness!

Peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"
 Late in time be - hold Him come, Off-spring of the Vir - gin's womb:
 Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with heal - ing in His wings.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God-head see; Hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty,
 Mild He lays His glo - ry by, Born that man no more may die,

With th'an - gel - ic host pro-claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 Pleased as man with men to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el.
 Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them sec - ond birth.

Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born King." A-men.

JESUS CHRIST

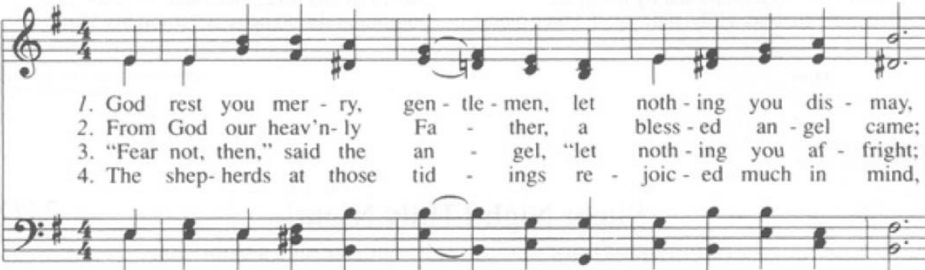
This advent of Jesus coming into the world signals peace on earth, and that produces rest for God's people. The events of our day, the crises in our lives, cannot rob us of the comfort and joy found in the victory of Christ over the power of Satan. This becomes the thrust of the popular carol, *God Rest you, Merry Gentlemen*.

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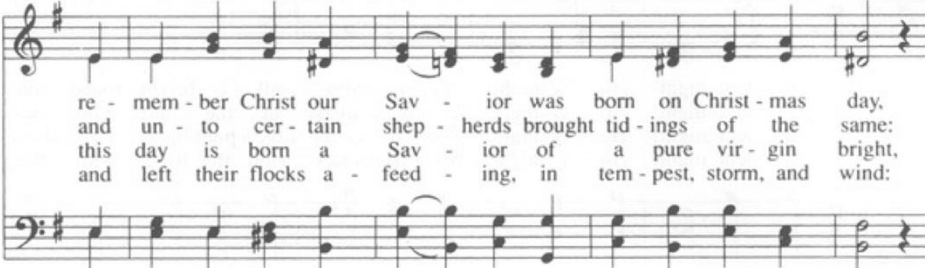
God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.
Luke 2:10

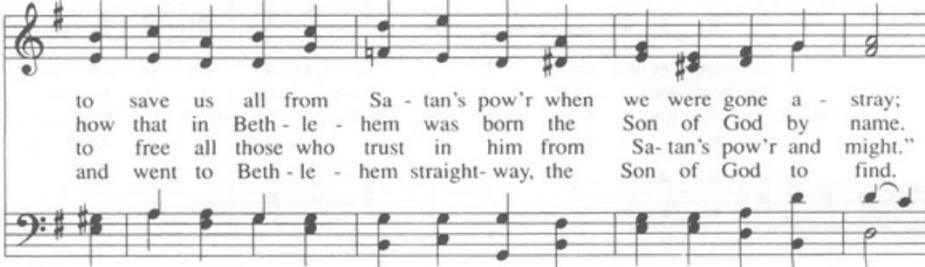
JESUS CHRIST:



1. God rest you mer - ry, gen - tle - men, let noth - ing you dis - may,
2. From God our heav'n - ly Fa - ther, a bless - ed an - gel came;
3. "Fear not, then," said the an - gel, "let noth - ing you af - fright;
4. The shep - herds at those tid - ings re - joic - ed much in mind,



re - mem - ber Christ our Sav - ior was born on Christ - mas day,
and un - to cer - tain shep - herds brought tid - ings of the same:
this day is born a Sav - ior of a pure vir - gin bright,
and left their flocks a - feed - ing, in tem - pest, storm, and wind:



to save us all from Sa - tan's pow'r when we were gone a - stray;
how that in Beth - le - hem was born the Son of God by name,
to free all those who trust in him from Sa - tan's pow'r and might,"
and went to Beth - le - hem straight - way, the Son of God to find.



^f REFRAIN
O tid - ings of com - fort and joy, com - fort and joy,

As a carol, this is one of history's most popular. It has two different tunes, and the one we typically sing, reproduced above, is slightly modified from one sung on London's streets in the late 1700's and early 1800's.

The history of Christ being born on Christmas day is a bit out of touch with what we know about the date of Christ's birth. It is not until the second century that we find the church addressing the idea of when the birth of Jesus happened. By then, there were no people alive who actually knew, and the birth date was being determined by either convenience or by high gear theology! Many of the people first trying to determine the birth of Christ were gnostic heretics for whom the death of Christ had little meaning, but the birth seemed to be something of note.

Clement of Alexandria, who lived from the mid 100's to about 215, wrote that the Gnostics, or at least one group of Gnostics, dated the birth of Christ to be May 20, 3 BC.⁴ This was one of a number of different dates bantered about as the possible date of Christ's birth. During this same time period, Origen (c. 185-254) (see Lessons 10 and 11) wrote against the concept of celebrating Christ's birth at all. Origen's review of scripture indicated to him that only evil people celebrated birthdays (namely Pharaoh and Herod).

Scholars are uncertain when exactly December 25th became the date to celebrate the birth of Christ. It is beyond dispute that by 336, December 25th was in place for at least the Roman church. In an almanac called "The Chronograph of 354," which is actually dated from 336, December 25th is listed as the celebratory feast day for the birth of Christ (Actually, the "eighth of Kalends of January," but translated into our calendar that is December 25th.) This is our earliest written reference to the 25th being the official celebration date. We also know that St. Ambrose, who died in 397, wrote a number of nativity hymns for singing during the Christmas season around December 25th. Pope Siricius, who died in 399, wrote the Bishop of Spain in 384 referencing the celebration of Christ's birth on December 25th.

It is noteworthy that prior to this time in the Eastern Church, January 6th was celebrated as the feast day for the birth of Christ. By the late 300s, the Eastern Church was also celebrating December 25th as the birth of Christ. The Cappadocian Fathers, also in the 300's, preached Christmas sermons on December 25th (we have sermons of Basil the Great

⁴ All of these dates that we use during this time period are reinterpreted into our calendar. Clement of Alexandria writes with the Egyptian calendar ("they say it took place in the 28th year of Augustus [3BC] and in the 25th day of the month Pachon" [May 20th that year] Origen, *The Stromata*, Chapter 21), which obviously was very different than our own. Similarly, the "BC" connotation was not devised until about 525 by the Catholic Monk named Dionysius Exiguus (Latin for "Dennis the Short"). As a practical matter, Dionysius made a mistake in computing the calendar. He dated Christ's birth too late. Christ was born while Herod Antipas was on the throne. Herod died in 4BC. Most scholars today recognize Christ was born somewhere between 6 and 4BC.

as well as Gregory of Nazianzus). We also have sermons of St. John Chrysostom that date from 386 and assert that December 25th is the proper date to celebrate the birth of Christ.

Why was December 25th picked as the day to celebrate? Especially, in light of the fact that there is no biblical basis for that view? Scholars differ on their answers to these questions. Two hypotheses are currently in vogue among scholars. The first is called “The History of Religions Hypothesis,” and the second is called “The Calculation Hypothesis.”

The History of Religions Hypothesis argues that Christians seized December 25th as a celebration day for the birth of Christ because of a Roman festival celebrated at much the same time. The Romans celebrated the Sun God in a feast of “Saturnalia.” This was a 7-day feast that occurred from December 17th through December 23rd. It was a pagan festival that had a lot of lewd behavior as well as gift giving and other traditions and festivities. Some believe that Christmas was a “Christianizing” of this pagan festival. The idea is that while Rome was in the aftermath of celebrating their Sun God, there were enough distractions that Christians could “get away” with a celebration of the birth of Christ. Supporters of this theory are quick to point out the many parallels between the pagan Sun Feast and Christmas. For example, December 25th is the actual winter solstice in the Roman calendar. By that, we mean it was the Roman calendar day when the sun began to “reassert itself” and days started lengthening. There is no question that Rome was fond of sun worship by the time that Christmas began finding its celebration in the church. Sun worship itself reached an apex in 274 when the Emperor Aurelian declared that the Sun God would be the preeminent of all Gods to be worshiped.

The History of Religions Hypothesis then asserts that while the worship of the Sun God was so popular during this December time period, the church was emphasizing that Jesus was in fact the real “sun” to be worshipped. Now, Latin and Greek did not make the pun off the words “sun” and “son” that English makes. The church taught Jesus as the Sun using both analogy and scripture.⁵ Scholars say we find here the basis for Christianity morphing a pagan festival into what we now consider to be Christmas. The History of Religions Hypothesis is first noted in the margin of Dionysius Bar-Salibi’s 1100’s manuscript. But, it really found its modern punch from writers in the last 120 years. Noteworthy are works by H. Usener in 1889 and B. Botte in 1932. This History of Religions Hypothesis is still the predominant hypothesis in Europe.⁶

A second, more recent hypothesis is called “The Calculation Hypothesis.” This hypothesis says that the church opted for the December 25th birthday for Jesus by making calculations

⁵ These sermons frequently pointed out that the sun rises in much the same way that Jesus had a resurrection. These sermons would also point to Malachi 3:20 where the sun of justice arises in a way that is prophetic about Jesus.

⁶ *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, (2d Edition) Vol. 3, p. 552.

from other dates believed true by the church at the time. At the time the church decided on December 25th as the birth of Christ, the church believed the crucifixion of Christ occurred on March 25th. How the church came to March 25th is not fully known. March 25th was the Spring Equinox, and was considered the anniversary of creation. Writers like Hippolytus (c170-235) and Tertullian (c161-220) believed that creation itself started on the day of the Spring Equinox. These writers and others then viewed the new creation following the crucifixion of Jesus as also occurring on the same day.⁷

What does the date of crucifixion have to do with the date of Christ's birth? During this early church time period, the church commonly believed that patriarchs and others in the Bible lived for exact year periods. In other words, when the Old Testament says that Moses was 120 when he died, these early church writers believed that 120 years were exactly 120 years ("Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died" Dt. 34:7.) So, they reasoned, Moses must have died on the anniversary of his birth. Otherwise, scripture would have said Moses lived 119 years and 364 days, or whatever it would have been. In similar fashion, these writers believed that Jesus started his ministry when he was 30, not 29 and 11 months and 4 days, but 30. Evidently, these writers did not notice that Luke dates Jesus as being "about" 30 (Lk. 3:23).

The Calculation Hypothesis concludes that March 25th would have been the date of the crucifixion and Jesus would have been crucified on an anniversary of his birth date. However, in the case of Jesus, you should not look to March 25th as a birth date, but rather an "incarnation" date. In other words, March 25th was believed to be the day that Jesus was conceived. If you then add 9 months for the time that Jesus would have spent in Mary's womb, presto! December 25th is the birth date of Christ! This theory also explains why the Eastern Church celebrated Christmas January 6th. In the east, they believed that Jesus was incarnated April 6th, not March 25th. Then, 9 months runs to January 6th. This theory has found a great deal of support after a publication by Thomas Talley, entitled *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, (Collegeville, Minn. 1991).

The Jerusalem church celebrated January 6th for the feast of Christ's birth until the mid-600s. At that point, the church began celebrating the birth of Christ on December 25, and shifted the January 6 celebration as the day of the Magi's visit. January 6 then becomes the last (or 12th!) day of Christmas, the day of celebrating the Magi.

The Magi are featured in many Christmas carols, most memorably in, *We Three Kings*.

⁷ Kelly at 61.

COMING OF THE WISE MEN

113 We Three Kings of Orient Are

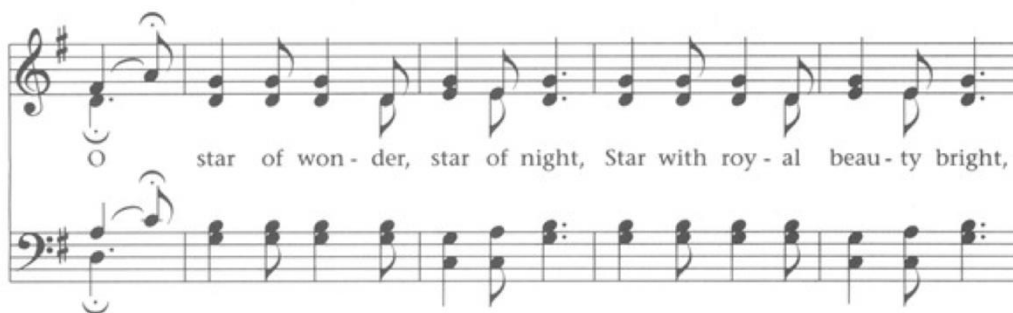
When Jesus was born ... there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem — Matthew 2:1 KJV



1. We three kings of Or - i - ent are: Bear - ing gifts we trav - erse a - far—
2. Born a King on Beth - le - hem's plain: Gold I bring to crown Him a - gain,
3. Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I, In - cense owns a De - i - ty nigh;
4. Myrrh is mine, its bit - ter per - fume Breathes a life of gath - er - ing gloom—
5. Glo - rious now be - hold Him a - rise: King and God and Sac - ri - fice;



Field and foun - tain, moor and moun - tain—Fol - low - ing yon - der star.
King for - ev - er, ceas - ing nev - er, O - ver us all to reign.
Prayer and prais - ing, all men rais - ing, Wor - ship Him, God on high.
Sor - r'wing, sigh - ing, bleed - ing, dy - ing, Sealed in the stone - cold tomb.
Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia! Earth to heav'n re - plies.



O star of won - der, star of night, Star with roy - al beau - ty bright,



West - ward lead - ing, still pro - ceed - ing, Guide us to thy per - fect light.

WORDS: John Henry Hopkins, Jr., 1820-1891
MUSIC: John Henry Hopkins, Jr., 1820-1891

KINGS OF ORIENT
Irregular

This carol is based on Matthew's passage,

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him” (Mt. 2:1-2).

If you look carefully at the Matthew passage, and compare it to the song, you quickly see that the song tracks church history, more than it does Matthew.

Matthew does not tell us the Magi were kings, nor does Matthew tell us that there were “three.” Both of those are later church decisions. Matthew merely reports that the Magi came from the East and brought Christ gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Historically, the church saw this Matthew passage indicating a fulfillment of Isaiah 60, which promised,

A multitude of camels will cover you...They will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the Lord” (Is. 60:6).

Earlier in the chapter, Isaiah noted that,

Nations will come to your light, and the kings to the brightness of your rising (Isa. 60:3).

From this passage, the church decided the gift-giving Magi must have been the kings Isaiah prophesied. This was already well in circulation by 200 when the North African theologian Tertullian wrote that the Eastern Church regarded the Magi as kings.

Why does Christmas tradition say there were three? Some believe that the three gifts indicated three men, but history shows more! Origen, the great early church father who allegorized the Old Testament, believed that Isaac, Abraham’s son, was a prototype of Jesus. From that, Origen went to Genesis 26:26-31 where King Abimelech and two others came to Isaac and acknowledged him as blessed of the Lord.

When Abimelech went to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army, Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?” They said, “We see plainly that the Lord has been with you. So we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the Lord.” So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths. And Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace.

Origen said that these three were the prototypes in the Old Testament of the Magi.

In the spirit of church tradition, what do we do with carols like *Good King Wenceslas*?



Good King Wenceslas.

CHRISTMAS.

Carol 415.

Words by J. M. Neale.

Traditional.

CHORUS.

1. Good King Wen - ces - las looked out On the Feast of Ste - phen, When the snow lay
round a - bout, Deep, and crisp and e - ven: Bright - ly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cru - el, When a poor man came in sight, Gath'ring win - ter fu - el.

2

Ten.* Solo. "Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"
Treb. Solo. "Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
By Saint Agnes' fountain."

3

Ten. Solo. "Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine-logs hither;
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither."
cho. Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament;
And the bitter weather.

4

Treb. Solo. "Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer."
Ten. Solo. "Mark my footsteps, my good page;
Tread thou in them boldly:
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

5

cho. In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

* All the verses may be sung in chorus if preferred.
Parish Choir, No. 1496—4.

I believe this carol's popularity is from the melody more than anything else. It typifies that spirit of a carol that has a dancing lilt to it. It is fun to sing. Very few of us know who "good king Wenceslas" was, much less what he was doing on the feast of Stephen!

Notwithstanding my recognition of some of the ignorance on the meaning and context of the words, I find the 1928 Oxford comments a bit overly harsh, though humorous.

This rather confused narrative owes its popularity to the delightful tune, which is that of a Spring carol, *Tempus adest florum* [Latin for "bloomtime has come"]... Unfortunately Neale in 1853 substituted for the Spring carol this "Good King Wenceslas," one of his less happy pieces... poor and commonplace to the last degree. The time has not yet come for a comprehensive book to discard it; but we reprint the tune ... not without hope that, with the present wealth of carols for Christmas, "Good King Wenceslas" may gradually pass into disuse, and the tune be restored to spring-time.⁸

The carol recounts the story of a king who goes out into harsh winter weather to feed and help a peasant. The king's page has trouble in the harsh weather, and the king urges the peasant to follow in his footsteps, and so make it through the snow. The peasant does, and the song ends with the admonition that there is blessing for those who seek to bless the poor.

The song is rooted in the legend of a Bohemian duke Wenceslas (c. 907-935) who was martyred on September 28, 935. Shortly after his death, several biographies were published of how he frequently gave alms to widows, orphans, and those in prison. He was given the title of "king" by Otto the Great (912-973) after his death.

You can see a statue of Wenceslas in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. It is found in the appropriately named, "Wenceslas Square," and was a popular meeting place for demonstrators against communism before communism's demise.

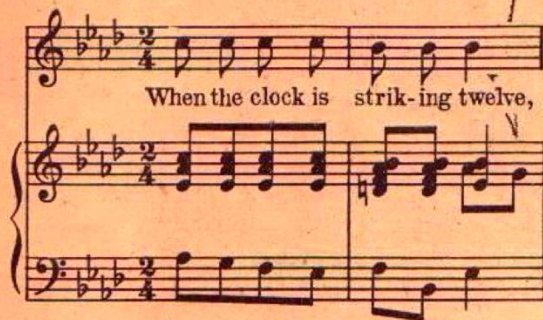
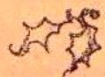
The "feast of Stephen" is celebrated on December 26 in the Western Church and December 27 in the Eastern Church. It is a day set aside to commemorate the first Christian martyr Stephen, whom we read about in Acts 6-7. In many countries, this day is a holiday. In the United Kingdom, it is celebrated as "Boxing Day." Some trace this name to the boxes that were set up on the Feast of Stephen to collect special offerings.

Can we consider modern Christmas carols without considering those of Santa Claus or Saint Nick?

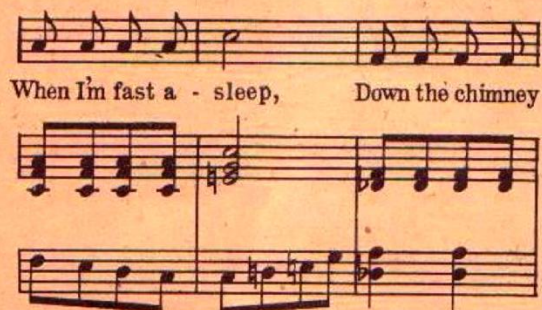
⁸ Dearmer, Percy, *et al.*, *The Oxford Book of Carols* (Oxford 1928), at 271.

Jolly Old Saint Nicholas

5



When the clock is strik-ing twelve,

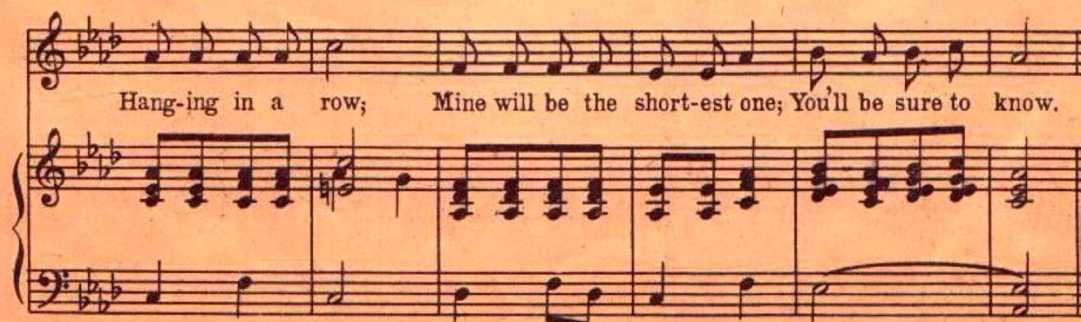


When I'm fast a - sleep,

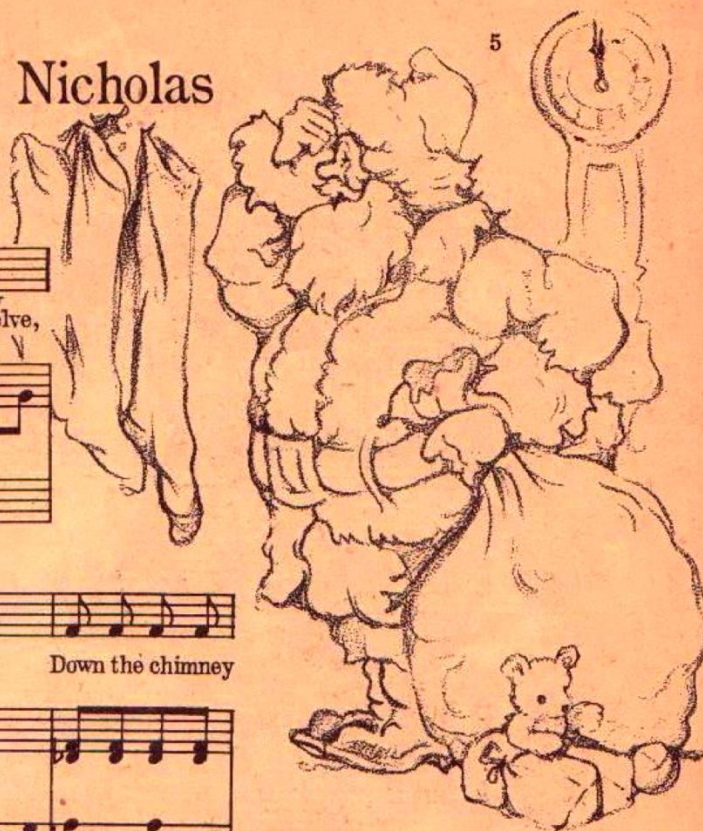
Down the chimney



broad and black, With your pack you'll creep; All the stock-ings you will find



Hang-ing in a row; Mine will be the short-est one; You'll be sure to know.



Nicolas was a real man who lived in the area of Turkey in the late 200's and early 300's. We actually have very little knowledge of him from his lifetime. We know he was the Bishop of Myra and that he died around 345-352. Beyond that, we have a number of legends that sprang up about him. The legends include his presence at the Council of Nicaea where he supposedly slapped the heretic Arius. Other legends include his care for others. One key legend said that Nicolas learned of a man with three daughters who had no dowry to give so that they could marry. The man was going to have to sell his daughters into slavery. Hearing of it, Nicolas took small bags of gold and tossed them into the man's window at night. The man caught Nicolas the third time, but Nicolas exacted a promise that the man would never identify Nicolas as the gift giver until after Nicolas's death (hence the explanation for the legend as opposed to a contemporaneous account).

Nicolas was also considered a patron saint of sailors. Through the centuries after his death, sailors throughout Europe invoked Nicolas as their protector in their ships. By the Reformation, more churches were dedicated to Nicolas than any other personage of the church other than Mary and Jesus himself. The reformers sought to eliminate the veneration given to Nicolas, but a number of countries continued to honor him as a patron saint looking after children and sailors. In Holland, he was called "Sinter Claas." The Dutch likely brought this tradition and veneration to New Amsterdam (later renamed "New York"), but there is no real evidence to that effect.

In 1809, things changed! Washington Irving wrote, *Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York*. Saint Nicholas plays a role in the work as the patron saint of New York. The following year, John Pintard tried to help the civil unrest and vandalism in New York by holding a banquet in honor of Saint Nicolas. Pintard felt that resurrecting old customs where rich and poor celebrated together would help quell the unrest. Pintard had a poster prepared for his celebration (which he set for December 6, the feast day of Saint Nicolas) of "Sacnte Claus".

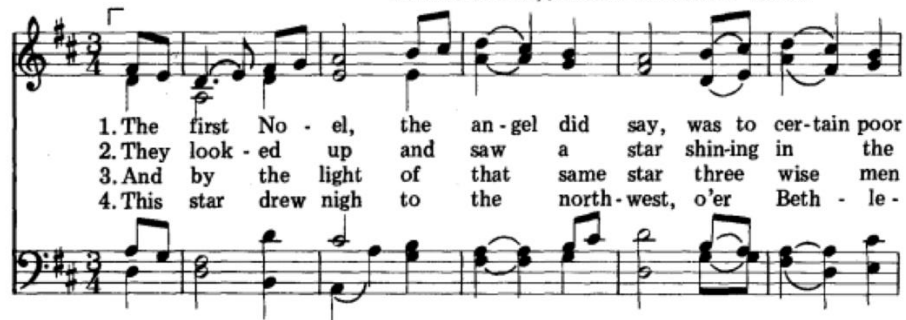
Eleven years later, in 1821, Irving wrote another book, the *History of New York* where he added more to the legend of Saint Nicolas. In this work, Irving wrote of Nicolas flying over trees in a wagon bringing gifts to children, with "smoke from his pipe spread like a cloud overhead."

Just one year later, Clement Clarke Moore joined in adding to the Nicolas tradition writing the children's poem, "Twas the night before Christmas." Actually, he called it, "A Visit from St. Nicolas!" The poem was picked up by various media and within 20 years had spread throughout the country. Moore invented the eight reindeer and set the time for the visit: The night before Christmas. Bingo! A new tradition was born.

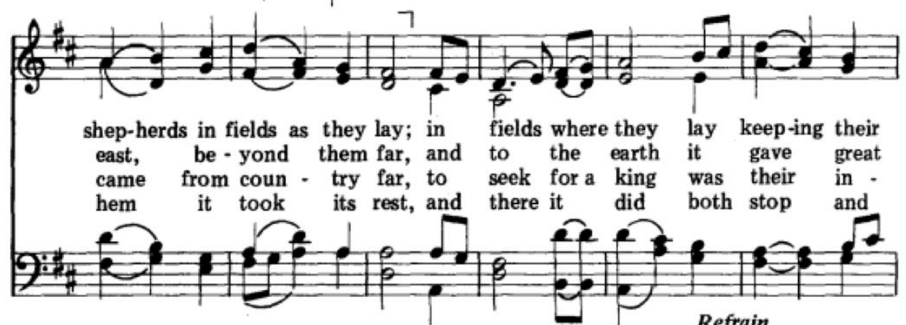
For all the fun of Santa Claus, I still love the basics of our Christmas songs that speak into the beauty and wonder of the incarnation of our Savior.

The First Noel, the Angel Did Say 162

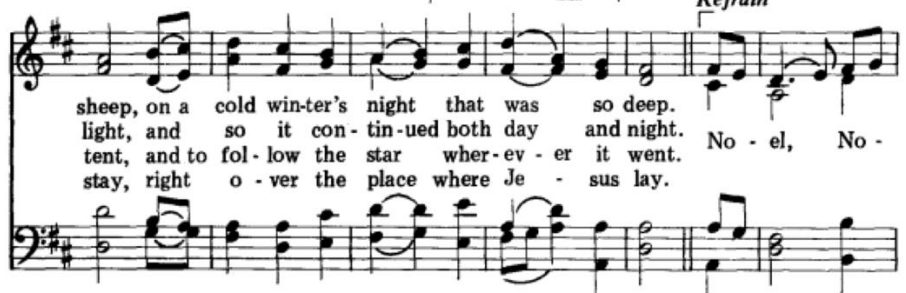
This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about . . . Mt. 1:18



1. The first No - el, the an - gel did say, was to cer - tain poor
 2. They look - ed up and saw a star shin - ing in the
 3. And by the light of that same star three wise men
 4. This star drew nigh to the north - west, o'er Beth - le -



shep - herds in fields as they lay; in fields where they lay keep - ing their
 east, be - yond them far, and to the earth it gave great
 came from coun - try far, to seek for a king was their in -
 hem it took its rest, and there it did both stop and



Refrain
 sheep, on a cold win - ter's night that was so deep.
 light, and so it con - tin - ued both day and night. No - el, No -
 tent, and to fol - low the star wher - ev - er it went.
 stay, right o - ver the place where Je - sus lay.



el, No - el, No - el, born is the King of Is - ra - el.

5. Then entered in those wise men three, 6. Then let us all with one accord
 full reverently upon their knee, sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
 and offered there in his presence who hath made heaven and earth of naught,
 their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. and with his blood our life hath bought.
(Ref.) *(Ref.)*

WORDS: Traditional English carol
 MUSIC: W. Sandys' Christmas Carols, 1833; arr. John Stainer, 1871

THE FIRST NOEL
 Irregular

Noel, or “nowell” was a word of joy about the birth of Christ that was shouted or sung. It has left modern English, save in the instance of Christmas carols. It is sung as a proclamation of our joy in the advent of our Savior, and is a fitting end to this class!