

Noel III (Part 2)

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The First Noel

The First Noel, the Angels did say,
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay.
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel!

They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the East beyond them far
And to the earth it gave great light
And so it continued both day and night.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel!

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God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

God rest ye merry, gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember, Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas day
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray
O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

In Bethlehem, in Israel,
This blessed Babe was born
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn
The which His Mother Mary
Did nothing take in scorn
O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace
This holy tide of Christmas
Shall give our sorrows chase
O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

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Oh Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

O sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation
Sing all that hear in heaven God's holy word
Give to our Father glory in the Highest
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

All Hail! Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning
O Jesus! for evermore be Thy name adored
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

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Bring A Torch, Jeanette, Isabella

Bring a torch, Jeanette, Isabella
Bring a torch, to the cradle run
It is Jesus, good folk of the village
Christ is born and Mary's calling
Ah! ah! beautiful is the Mother
Ah! ah! beautiful is her Son

It is wrong when the Child is sleeping
It is wrong to talk so loud
Silence, all, as you gather around
Lest your noise should waken Jesus
Hush! hush! see how fast He slumbers
Hush! hush! see how fast He sleeps

Hasten now, good folk of the village
Hasten now the Christ Child to see
You will find Him asleep in the manger
Quietly come and whisper softly
Hush! hush! peacefully now He slumbers
Hush! hush! peacefully now He sleeps.

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The Little Drummer Boy

Come they told me, pa rum pum pum pum
A new born King to see, pa rum pum pum pum
Our finest gifts we bring, pa rum pum pum pum
To lay before the King, pa rum pum pum pum,
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,

So to honor Him, pa rum pum pum pum,
When we come.

Little Baby, pa rum pum pum pum
I am a poor boy too, pa rum pum pum pum
I have no gift to bring, pa rum pum pum pum
That's fit to give the King, pa rum pum pum pum,
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,

Shall I play for you, pa rum pum pum pum,
On my drum?

Mary nodded, pa rum pum pum pum
The ox and lamb kept time, pa rum pum pum pum
I played my drum for Him, pa rum pum pum pum
I played my best for Him, pa rum pum pum pum,
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,

Then He smiled at me, pa rum pum pum pum
Me and my drum.

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Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace
Hail the Son of Righteousness
Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate deity
Mild he lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Hark! the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

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I Wonder As I Wander

I wonder as I wander

I wonder as I wander out under the sky
How Jesus the Saviour did come for to die
For poor ordinary people like you and like I
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus `twas in a cow`s stall
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all
But high from the heavens a star`s light did fall
And the promise of ages it then did recall

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O Christmas Tree!

O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Thy leaves are so unchanging
O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Thy leaves are so unchanging
Not only green when summer's here,
But also when 'tis cold and drear
O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Thy leaves are so unchanging

O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
How richly God has decked thee
O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
How richly God has decked thee
Thou bidst us true and faithful be
And trust in God unchangingly.
O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
How richly God has decked thee

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O Little Town Of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth

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Jingle Bells

Dashing through the snow
In a one-horse open sleigh
Through the fields we go
Laughing all the way
Bells on bob-tail ring
Making spirits bright
What fun it is to ride and sing
A sleighing song tonight

Oh, Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way
Oh what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh
Oh, Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way
Oh what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh

A day or two ago
I thought I'd take a ride
And soon Miss Fanny Bright
Was seated by my side
The horse was lean and lank
Misfortune seemed his lot
We ran into a drifted bank
And there we got upsot

Oh, Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way
Oh what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh
Oh, Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way
Oh what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh

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The Twelve Days of Christmas

On the first day of Christmas
My true love sent to me
A partridge in a pear tree

On the second day of Christmas
My true love sent to me:
Two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree

On the third day of Christmas
My true love sent to me:
Three French hens
Two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree

On the fourth day of Christmas
My true love sent to me:
Four coly birds
Three French hens
Two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree

On the fifth day of Christmas
My true love sent to me:
Five gold rings
Four coly birds
Three French hens
Two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree

On the twelfth day of Christmas
My true love sent to me:
Twelve lords a-leaping
Eleven ladies dancing
Ten pipers piping
Nine drummers drumming
Eight maids a-milking
Seven swans a-swimming
Six geese a-laying
Five gold rings
Four coly birds
Three French hens
Two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree

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We Wish You A Merry Christmas

We wish you a Merry Christmas
And a Happy New Year
Good tidings we bring
To you and your kin
Good tidings for Christmas
And a Happy New Year

We want some figgy pudding
And a cup of good cheer
The joy of His birth
Brings peace upon earth
We wish you a Merry Christmas
And a Happy New Year

We all love figgy pudding
And a cup of good cheer
Good tidings we bring
To you and your kin
Good tidings for Christmas
And a Happy New Year

We won't go until we get some
So bring some right here
The joy of His birth
Brings peace upon earth
We wish you a Merry Christmas
And a Happy New Year

We wish you a Merry Christmas
And a Happy New Year
Good tidings we bring
To you and your kin
Good tidings for Christmas
And a Happy New Year

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Notes on the Noel lyrics

The Noel collection is comprised of 24 songs that are among the most widely recognized and frequently sung Christmas songs in contemporary Western society. All but four of these 24 songs are Christmas carols in the strict sense, in that they are songs with words that describe the birth of Jesus Christ. The Nativity is referred to only indirectly, by the frequent mention of Christmas, in the lyrics for “Oh, Christmas Tree” and “We Wish You A Merry Christmas”, and the words for “Good King Wenceslas” and “Jingle Bells” contain no references to either Christ or Christmas. These four songs are generally considered to be Christmas carols as well, however, because the term “carol” is usually defined more broadly to include songs that are associated with Christmastime. The noun “carol” is sometimes defined more narrowly as a Christmas song sung by a choir. The verb “carol” means to sing Christmas songs in a choir.

Apart from the spirit and ethos of Christmas, the most important connecting thread among the 24 carols contained in the Noel collection is the fact that they are all songs that are typically sung by a choir. Most of the Noel carols date from the 19th century, during which the tradition of Christmas caroling was developed and was most popular. The caroling tradition is referred to directly in the words for two of the Noel carols (“Deck The Halls” and “We Wish You A Merry Christmas”), and implied in the words for two others (“Hark, The Herald Angels Sing” and “Jingle Bells”). One of the two most notable exceptions regarding the dates of origin of the Noel carols is “The Little Drummer Boy”, which was written in 1958 by Katherine K. Davis, Henry Onorati, and Harry Simeone, and is the only Noel carol that postdates the 19th century. The other is “Good King Wenceslas”, which dates back to 13th century Finland, and is the oldest of the Noel carols.

The melodies for the 24 Noel carols suggest a variety of musical moods, including jubilant, pastoral, reverent, and mysterious. The lyrics for these songs are generally reflective of these many moods, and are no less diverse. This is especially true of punctuation, the use of which varies widely in the original versions of the words for the 24 carols. In editing these words, care was taken to achieve a greater degree of uniformity, and a minimalist approach regarding punctuation was employed. In the edited lyrics for the 24 carols, commas are used only to

separate components of multi-phrase expressions, and periods are used only in association with commas. Exclamation points are used sparingly and are reserved for words or phrases that are clearly exclamatory (for example, Gloria in Excelsis Deo!). Semi-colons have been removed entirely, and there is only a single instance (“The Twelve Days of Christmas”) in which the edited lyrics make use of a colon.

Another important consideration regarding the editing of these lyrics was the inclusion or non-inclusion of specific verses. The original lyrics for all 24 carols contain multiple verses, often as many as four or more, and numerous verses were omitted in the compilation of these edited lyrics. For three of the carols (“Away In A Manger”, “Oh, Holy Night”, and “Hark, The Herald Angels Sing”) only a single verse is given in the edited version. For most of the others, two or three verses are given, and in many instances one or more verses were eliminated. More than three verses were given for two carols (“We Three Kings” and “I Saw Three Ships”) with unusually short verses, and for two others (“Good King Wenceslas” and “It Came Upon A Midnight Clear”) the lyrics for which are elegantly constructed poems that defy abridgement. Besides the length and literary quality of the verses, other criteria used in the selection of verses include the rhythmic suitability of the verses for singing, and the degree to which the verses presented a more ecumenical and less strictly religious conception of Christmas.

Four other specific edits are worthy of mention. In “Away In A Manger”, the line “The stars in the bright sky” was shortened to “The stars in the sky”. This was done mainly because that is how I learned it, but also because the edited line, at least in my view, is more suitable for singing. In “God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen”, “This holy tide of Christmas all other doth deface” was changed to “This holy tide of Christmas shall give our sorrows chase” because the edited line is relevant and appropriate, but far less cryptic in its meaning. In “The Twelve Days Of Christmas”, “five golden rings” was changed to “five gold rings”, again because that is the way I learned it, and again because in my view the edited line is more suitable for singing. And finally, in “We Wish You A Merry Christmas”, the six verses were combined into three double verses. This was done to make the carol more suitable for singing by eliminating the need for too many repetitions of the refrain.

The stories behind the origins of the 24 Noel carols are replete with interesting details that in many cases shed light on the carols themselves. Although these details are far too numerous to recount here without exception, a few details are of particular interest, and therefore worthy of mention. For example, two of the melodies for the Noel carols (“Joy To The World” and “Hark, The Herald Angels Sing”) were written by famous classical composers (Handel and Mendelssohn respectively). “The Coventry Carol” is so named because it is the only surviving piece of music from a mystery play performed in Coventry, England in the 16th century. The uncommonly dark mood of this carol is accounted for by the fact that it is the only carol in which the Slaughter of the Innocents, the result of King Herod’s obscene order to slay all newborn male children, is described in the lyrics.

“God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen” (and not “God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen”, as I had incorrectly always assumed it to be) is one of the oldest Christmas carols, dating back to the 15th century, and was originally sung by town watchmen who traditionally received extra pay during the Christmas season. “Jingle Bells”, written in 1857 by James Pierpoint, an American minister, was actually composed in conjunction with a Thanksgiving celebration, and only later came to be popularly associated with Christmas. The various gifts described in “The Twelve Days Of Christmas” are thought to be symbolic representations of Biblical concepts. And finally, in this last connection, the gift on the fourth day was “four coly birds” (and not “four calling birds”, as I had incorrectly always assumed it to be). A coly bird (pronounced `coal-ee) is an African bird with a long tail and ornate plumage, similar in size and shape to a peacock.

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