
GANZ NOTES - THE NIGHT SCHOOL, SERIES 9, PART IV: CHRISTMAS CAROLS

TODAY, 14 DECEMBER 2021

Today is the 384th day of the year; the Moon is waxing (gibbous – “*Astronomy*. Said of the moon or a planet when the illuminated portion exceeds a semicircle but is less than a circle”) and is illuminated at 77.5%; the Winter Solstice happens one week from today – the longest dark of the year in the northern hemisphere – on **Tuesday, December 21, 2021 at 7:59 am PST**.

It is also, besides the birthday of my brother Mark, the feast day of St. John of the Cross, about whom:

Mystic and Doctor of the Church (1542-1591) “Where there is no love, put love, and you will draw love out.” St. John of the Cross has been acclaimed as one of the church’s great mystics – indeed, a genius of mystical theology. For this he was not merely canonized but proclaimed a Doctor of the Church. In light of this solid recognition, it is important to recall that such approval came only after his death. In life, his spiritual insights were forged in the experience of persecution and suffering, trials inflicted not simply by his own Church but by the members of his own religious community – the Carmelites.” [Ellsberg, Robert. *All Saints*, at December 14th entry on “John of the Cross”. The Crossroad Publishing Company. Kindle Edition.]

John wrote: “Where there is no love, put love, and you will draw love out.”

“O COME DIVINE MESSIAH”

Author: M. l'abbé Pellegrin (1663-1745) - "A French abbé and well-known librettist. His collections of French carols were published in 1708 and 1711."¹

Translator: Sister Mary of St. Philip

Performance: The Benedictine Sisters of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, *Advent at Ephesus* (released 2013).

1 - O come, divine Messiah!
The world in silence waits the day
When hope shall sing its triumph,
And sadness flee away.

Refrain:

Dear Savior, haste! Come, come to earth.
Dispel the night and show your face,
And bid us hail the dawn of grace.
O come, Divine Messiah!
The world in silence waits the day
When hope shall sing its triumph,
And sadness flee away.

2 - O come, Desired of nations,
Whom priest and prophet long foretold.
Come break the captive's fetters,
Redeem the long-lost fold. [Refrain]

3 - O come in peace and meekness,
For lowly will your cradle be:
Though clothed in human weakness
We shall your Godhead see. [Refrain]

¹ From: https://hymnary.org/text/o_come_divine_messiah.

SCRIPTURE - "REJOICE ALWAYS"

Paul exhorts them all yet again to "rejoice." In that joy their "kindness" (or "gentleness") can and should "be known to all" (4:5). "The Lord is near" refers to the soon-expected "day of Christ" (2:16; cf. 3:20). In the meantime, they must not "worry"; that would be the opposite of joy. They must simply make their prayers and requests known to God (4:6), and "the peace of God" (cf. John 14:27), which has to do with far more than the absence of conflict or suffering (1:29), "will guard their hearts and minds" (4:7). "Peace" is the gift that flows from "grace" (1:2; Rom 5:1-11). "Finally," Paul exhorts them simply to hold fast to all that is good and repeats again the theme of learning from and imitating his manner of following Christ. The "peace" blessing is also found elsewhere (Rom 15:33; 2 Cor 13:11).²

"hold firm" - **στήκω** impf. ἔστηκον (RV 12:4); a new verb from ἔστηκα, the perfect of ἵστημι (*place, put*); (1) literally *stand* (MK 11:25); (2) figuratively; (a) as demonstrating stability *stand firm, be steadfast* (1C 16:13); (b) as gaining approval when examined *stand* (RO 14:4), opposite *πίπτω* (*fall*)³

Philippians 4 - ¹ So then, my brothers and dear friends whom I miss so much, my joy and my crown, hold firm in the Lord, dear friends.*

Last Advice

² I urge Euodia, and I urge Syntyche to come to agreement with each other in the Lord; ³ and I ask you, Syzygus,^a really to be a 'partner' and help them. These women have struggled hard for the gospel with me, along with Clement and all my other fellow-workers, whose names are written in the book of life.*

² Vincent M. Smiles, "[The Letter to the Philippians](#)," in *New Testament*, ed. Daniel Durken, The New Collegeville Bible Commentary (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 633.

impf. imperfect

³ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#), Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 356.

* 1:4b; 1 Th 2:19-20

* Dn 12:1a; Rv 20:12i

⁴ **Always be joyful, then, in the Lord; I repeat, be joyful.*** ⁵ Let your good sense be obvious to everybody. The Lord is near.* ⁶ Never worry about anything; but tell God all your desires of every kind in prayer and petition shot through with gratitude,* ⁷ and the peace of God which is beyond our understanding will guard your hearts and your thoughts^b in Christ Jesus.* ⁸ Finally, brothers, **let your minds be filled with** everything that is true,^c everything that is honourable, everything that is upright and pure, everything that we love and admire^d – with whatever is good and praiseworthy. ⁹ Keep doing everything you learnt from me and were told by me and have heard or seen me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.* ⁴

Ganz (6 October 2014), while on day six of directing the Long Retreat for the Tertians, wrote: “Up to now, I have paid more attention to “*think* about these things,” (v 6) in the sense of pondering them, wondering about them, and so forth. But since yesterday I have heard it differently: “think about *these* things,” **in the sense of concentrating on noticing these things rather than their opposites** (many examples of which exist in the world for us to worry about if we fall prey to that temptation).”

JOY TO THE WORLD (1719, BY ISAAC WATTS)

Wikipedia at “**Joy to the World**” –

“Joy to the World” is an English Christmas carol written in 1719 by the English minister and hymnwriter Isaac Watts. **The carol is based on a Christian interpretation of Psalm 98, Psalm 96 (verses 11 and 12), and chapter 3 of the Book of Genesis (verses 17 and 18)** and is usually sung to an 1848 arrangement

* 1:4b

* 1 Co 16:22i

* Mt 6:25–34 • Ep 5:20+

* Jn 14:27; Col 3:15

* 1 Th 2:13d; 2 Th 3:7b

⁴ [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Php 4.

by the American composer Lowell Mason. Since the 20th century, "Joy to the World" has been the most-published Christmas hymn in North America.

Wikipedia at "**Isaac Watts**" – "Isaac Watts (17 July 1674 – 25 November 1748) was an English Congregational minister, hymn writer, theologian, and logician. He was a prolific and popular hymn writer and is credited with some 750 hymns. His works include "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross", "Joy to the World", and "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past". He is recognized as the "Godfather of English Hymnody"; many of his hymns remain in use today and have been translated into numerous languages."

Performance: *King's Choir Christmas Hymns* (2021) by the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, England, directed by Sir Stephen Cleobury – track #1 – "Joy to the World".

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GAUDETE-JOY AND LAETARE-JOY.

Latin: *laetor, -ari, -atus sum* (1): a first conjugation deponent verb (passive in form; active in meaning) that means: "to rejoice; to feel joy; to be joyful or glad."

Latin: *gaudeo, -ēre* (2): this second conjugation verb means: "to rejoice; to be glad; to take pleasure in".

So, what's the difference? We have Gaudete Sunday that commences the third week of Advent; we have Laetare Sunday that commences the fourth week of Lent.

Gaudete-joy is an inwardly felt joy; a hidden (to anyone else but me) joy. We should think in Advent of the hidden joy of a mother in communion with her baby who is stirring within her, very soon to be born. Gaudete-joy is what Mary is feeling as she gets close to delivering her baby.

Laetare-joy is a joy that is expressed outwardly, robustly, loudly. We should think of the crowd at the recent Timbers Soccer game, when in the last three second of stoppage time, the Timbers scored and tied the game, sending the national championship game into overtime.

Joy⁵ to the world! the Lord is come;
Let Earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature⁶ sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains⁷
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

⁵ “**Joy**” – Note that this is the first word of the poem, which indicates unambiguously the theme of the poem. We must assume **Laetare-joy** is meant here.

⁶ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**nature**” - “**c.** The vital functions of the human body as requiring sustenance, esp. nourishment. Frequently in *to support (also †suffice, †sustain) nature.*” But further, “**a.** The inherent dominating power or impulse in a person by which character or action is determined, directed, or controlled. Sometimes referred to as if having an independent existence or character, and in early use frequently with implication of moral principle.... Chiefly *Christian Church*. This impulse as contrasted with the perceived influence of God on man.”

⁷ “**While fields and floods...**” – This insight completely eludes human beings, at least throughout our present Age; namely, that the created world, in its own way – every distinct created thing – rejoices in the presence of God, and especially of God-with-us (where “us” means all created things).

YES, VIRGINIA

“YES, VIRGINIA, THERE IS A SANTA CLAUS”

Eight-year-old Virginia O’Hanlon wrote a letter to the editor of New York’s *Sun*, and the quick response was printed as an unsigned editorial **Sept. 21, 1897**. The work of veteran newsman Francis Pharcellus Church has since become history’s most reprinted newspaper editorial, appearing in part or whole in dozens of languages in books, movies, and other editorials, and on posters and stamps.

“St. Nicholas was the hero of several legends involving children. To be sure, they reflect an image of childhood that has little to do with “sugarplums.” In one story Nicholas rescued three young girls whose father, for want of a dowry, was about to sell them into prostitution. Nicholas tossed three bags of gold through an open window, enough to pay the dowry of each of the sisters. In another story these three bags of gold (with which the saint is often depicted) became the heads of three little boys who were murdered by an evil maniac. The holy bishop not only uncovered the crime but restored the children to life.

It is common and appropriate to decry the commercialization of the Christmas season. There are fewer voices raised to mourn the trivialization of St. Nicholas. Well does he deserve to be the patron of children, and well might they delight in his name. But he might be remembered not only as the jolly source of toys and treats but also as the protector of those whose lives and innocence remain threatened today, as they were in the time of St. Nicholas, by violence, poverty, and exploitation.” [Ellsberg, Robert. *All Saints*, at “St. Nicholas of Myra – December 6th”. The Crossroad Publishing Company. Kindle Edition.]

DEAR EDITOR: “I am 8-years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, ‘If you see it in the *Sun*, then it’s so.’ Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?”

To MS. VIRGINIA O’HANLON
115 WEST NINETY-FIFTH STREET.

VIRGINIA, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men’s

or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI - "LOVE CAME DOWN AT CHRISTMAS"

Performances: *The John Rutter Christmas Album* with Stephan Varcoe directing The Cambridge Singers; John Rutter directing the City of London Symphony (released 2002); *Point of Grace, A Christmas Story* (released 1999) - "When Love Came Down" (this is a Carol that takes from Rossetti only the line "When Love came down at Christmastide"); *Jars of Clay, Christmas Songs* (2007), "Love Came Down at Christmas"

(this version arranged by Shawn Colvin and Doug Petty). **Shawn Colvin**,⁸ *Holiday Songs and Lullabies* (released 1998) - "Love Came Down at Christmas".

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine,
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love Incarnate, Love Divine,
Worship we our Jesus, -
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love the universal sign.

See my Ganz Notes on this poem/carol.

JULIAN OF NORWICH

Julian at the end of the Long Text of her *Showings* writes:

This book is begun by God's gift and his grace, but it is not yet performed, as I see it. For charity, let us all join with God's working in prayer, thanking, trusting, rejoicing, for so will our good Lord be entreated, by the understanding which I took in all his own intention, and in the sweet words where he says most

⁸ From the **Shawn Colvin** website - "Over the last few decades, Americana has evolved to encompass a myriad of sounds rooted in folk, country, blues, gospel, and rock & roll. And while fans and critics may never agree on exactly how to define it, one thing is certain: **It's a sound borne of our need to express all the hurt and joy bursting from our hearts.** Three-time Grammy winner Shawn Colvin stopped the industry in its tracks with her arresting 1989 debut, *Steady On*. The following spring, Colvin took home the GRAMMY for Best Contemporary Folk Album, legitimizing a burgeoning genre that's grown ever stronger and richer with time. As the record's 30th anniversary looms, the trailblazing singer and songwriter readies a truly mesmerizing acoustic reinvention of her breakthrough release, lacing up each track with fresh layers of warmth, charm, and wisdom."

happily³⁹⁷: I am the foundation of your beseeching. For truly I saw and understood in our Lord's meaning that he revealed it because he wants to have it better known than it is. In which knowledge he wants to give us grace to love him and to cleave to him, for he beholds his heavenly treasure with so great love on earth that he will give us more light³⁹⁸ and solace in heavenly joy, by drawing our hearts from the sorrow and the darkness which we are in.

And from the time that it was revealed, I desired many times to know in what was our Lord's meaning. And fifteen years after and more, I was answered in spiritual understanding, and it was said: What, do you wish to know your Lord's meaning in this thing? **Know it well, love was his meaning. Who reveals it to you? Love. What did he reveal to you? Love³⁹⁹. Why does he reveal it to you? For love.** Remain in this, and you will know more of the same. But you will never know different, without end.⁹

JAMES TAYLOR - "WHO COMES THIS NIGHT?"

Singer and Melody: James Taylor¹⁰

Album: *James Taylor at Christmas* (2006)

³⁹⁷ See p. 157.

³⁹⁸ 'With so great ... more light' from SS; P, C omit.

³⁹⁹ 'What did ... Love' from SS; P, C omit.

⁹ Julian of Norwich, *Julian of Norwich: Showings*, ed. Richard J. Payne, trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 342.

¹⁰ **James Vernon Taylor** (born March 12, 1948) is an American singer-songwriter and guitarist. A five-time Grammy Award winner, Taylor was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2000.

Track #12 - "Who Comes this Night?"

Lyrics: Dave Grusin and Sally Stevens - © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

Who **comes**¹¹ this night, this wintry night,
As to the lowly manger?
The Shepherds and the Kings did come
To welcome in the Stranger.

Who **sends** this song upon the air,
To ease the soul that's aching?
To still the cry of deep despair
And heal the heart that's breaking.

Brother Joseph bring the Light
Fast, the night is fading.
And who will come this wintry night
To where the Stranger's waiting?

Who **comes** this night, with humble heart,
To give the fullest measure?
A gift of purest love to bring -
What good and worthy treasure!

Brother Joseph bring the Lamb
For they are asking for him.
The children come this starry night
To lay their hearts before Him.

For those who would the Stranger greet
Must lay their heart before Him,
And raise their song in voices sweet
To worship and adore Him.

Pure of heart this starry night
To lay their hearts before Him.

¹¹ "Who comes..." - This question, which the whole carol will be about, has an answer. The answer is "It is God, the Lord Christ, who comes", which the lyrics keep referring to as the "Stranger." We know that this answer is this, because the "Who sends this song" in the next stanza clearly refers to God, or perhaps to the child Jesus whose baby-cries are the "song".

“HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING”

See my Ganz Notes on this text.

"Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus"

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Photo Gallery

The Editorial

DEAR EDITOR: I am 8 years old.

Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.

Papa says, 'If you see it in THE SUN it's so.'

Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?

VIRGINIA O'HANLON.

115 WEST NINETY-FIFTH STREET.

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minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

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“LOVE CAME DOWN AT CHRISTMAS” (1885) BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Version: 5, 14 December 2021

Rossetti, Christina, editor, Simon Humphries. *Christina Rossetti, Poems and Prose* (Oxford World's Classics), “Love Came Down at Christmas” (Kindle Locations 6927-6932). OUP Oxford. Kindle Edition.

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1st edition (December 15, 2008)

Language: English

Paperback: 528 pages

ISBN-10: 0192807153

ISBN-13: 978-0192807151

Britannica at “Christina Rossetti”¹ –

Christina Rossetti, in full **Christina Georgina Rossetti**, pseudonym Ellen Alleyne, (born Dec. 5, 1830, London, Eng. — died Dec. 29, 1894, London), one of the most important of English women poets both in range and quality. She excelled in works of fantasy, in poems for children, and in religious poetry.

Christina was the youngest child of Gabriele Rossetti and was the sister of the painter-poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Wikipedia –

¹ Bryson, J. "Christina Rossetti." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 1, 2021.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Christina-Rossetti>.

“Love Came Down at Christmas” is a Christmas poem by Christina Rossetti. It was first published without a title in *Time Flies: A Reading Diary* in 1885. It was later included in the collection *Verses* in 1893 under the title *Christmastide*.

The poem has been set to music as a Christmas carol by many composers including R O Morris, Harold Darke, Leo Sowerby, John Kelsall and John Rutter and is also sung to the traditional Irish melody "Garton". More recently, the poem was given a modern treatment by Christian band Jars of Clay on their 2007 album, *Christmas Songs*. American composer Jennifer Higdon set the text for solo soprano, harp and four-part chorus. A new setting by the British composer David J Loxley-Blount was performed in Southwark Cathedral on 8 December 2014 by the Financial Times Choir conducted by Paul Ayres. It was repeated by the Trafalgar Square Christmas Tree on 11 December 2014.

Performances: *The John Rutter Christmas Album* with Stephan Varcoe directing The Cambridge Singers; John Rutter directing the City of London Symphony (released 2002); Point of Grace, *A Christmas Story* (released 1999) – “When Love Came Down” (this is a Carol that takes from Rossetti only the line “When Love came down at Christmastide”); Jars of Clay, *Christmas Songs* (2007), “Love Came Down at Christmas” (this version arranged by Shawn Colvin and Doug Petty); Christmas Choir and the London Fox Choir, *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* (released 2012) – “Love Came Down at Christmas”; Shawn Colvin, *Holiday Songs and Lullabies* (released 1998) – “Love Came Down at Christmas”.

SIBLINGS

From an article called “A Little Society” by Casey N. Cep, republished by the Poetry Foundation website. It is an article about literary siblings in English literature.

Unlike the Lambs and the Wordsworths, pairs of siblings in which the brother’s reputation far exceeded the sister’s, one Victorian family produced a daughter whose fame has outlasted that of her brother. **Christina Rossetti is considered one of the greatest Victorian poets, while her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti is remembered more for his status as sibling than painter or poet.**

Born to an accomplished poet and Dante scholar, Christina and her brother were the “two storms” in a family of four children whose other dyad was known as the “two calms.” **All four of the Rossetti children had accomplished careers as writers and critics, encouraged by a childhood filled with arts and letters. As teenagers, they played rounds of *bouts-rimés*, racing against one another to**

write sonnets with specified forms and rhymes; Christina was the youngest, but is said to have excelled most at the game.

While Dante Gabriel founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to surround himself with other artists, Christina found support from the Portfolio Society, a group of female poets. Despite their esteemed position in literary society, they remained each other's best critics. Exchanging letters almost daily for years, they critiqued one another's work, suggested new topics and themes, and helped to organize poems into volumes for publication.

THE POEM

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 384 CE:

For us and for our salvation
He came down from Heaven,
And by the Holy Spirit was incarnate

[τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν **κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν** καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου²]

of the Virgin Mary
And became a human being.

Love³ came down⁴ at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine,

² J. N. D. Kelly, [*Early Christian Creeds*](#), Third Edition. (London; New York: Continuum, 2006), 297.

³ “**Love**” – This noun is repeated *ten times* within this poem, lest we miss that LOVE is her most important insight about Christmas, that we overlook that LOVE is what God meant and means.

⁴ “**came down**” – The geometry of the spiritual life: God is “up” and we are “down.” I continue to think that the reason for this comes from the impact on human beings of the night sky, during the endless ages before the dominating presence of electric lights at night in cities obscured the night sky. There is of course the account in Luke’s Gospel about the “angel hosts” – Luke 2:15 - When the angels went away from them **to heaven**, [New American Bible, Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Lk 2:15.]

Love was born at Christmas⁵,
Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love Incarnate, Love Divine,⁶
Worship we our Jesus, -
But wherewith⁷ for sacred sign?

Love⁸ shall be our token⁹,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love the universal sign.

⁵ “**Love was born at Christmas**” – In one way, we could consider this an astonishing claim, because it suggests that LOVE had not existed before, or that (and I think this the more important point) it remained *hidden* from our view (as is a child in the womb). If we take Rossetti’s metaphor – “birth” – in this way, then we are asked to consider that the Old Testament was but the “womb” inside of which LOVE was gestating, awaiting “the fullness of Time”, God’s time, for LOVE to be “born”, to become perceivable and available to us in a “language” we could understand (not a theological virtue – Love – but a loving, breathing, divine Person become fully human).

⁶ “**Love Incarnate, Love Divine**” – This is her version of the Creed’s articulation of the “hypostatic union” – the two Natures unified in the one Person. On the one hand, she gives the name “Love” as that which “hypostatically” unifies the two Natures of Christ, instead of using the word “person.” Yet, by doing this poetically, she captures the “two ways” of loving: the human way and the divine way, which finally are unified in a single Person.

⁷ “**wherewith**” – The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the adverb “**wherewith**” – An interrogative adverb: “With what?”.

⁸ “**Love**” – the four-fold repetition at the beginning of each line of the closing stanza is powerful, and insistent. It is here that I guess at her imitation of Julian of Norwich (see my quotation of her above).

⁹ “**token**” – The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**token**” – “Something that serves to indicate a fact, event, object, feeling, etc.; a sign, a symbol.” However, in Old English, a “token” means an “ensign”. And an “ensign” means: “A signal; a rallying or battle-cry, watchword. Chiefly *Scottish*. *Obsolete*.”

JULIAN OF NORWICH

The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., at “Julian of Norwich” -

Julian of Norwich (c. 1342 – after 1416), English spiritual writer. Little is known of her life, except that by 1394 she was an * anchoress, prob. at St Julian’s church, Norwich. Acc. to her own account, in May 1373 she received a revelation, consisting of 15 ‘showings’ (and one more ‘showing’ the day after). Her book, commonly known in modern times as *Showings* or *Revelation(s) of Divine Love*, survives in two recensions. The first draft (the **Short Text**) was prob. written soon after 1373, but it was not until 1393 at the earliest that she completed the **Long Text**, in which she expounds an original and competent theological vision of life, on the basis of the revelation and her reflections upon it.¹⁰

Julian at the end of the Long Text of her *Showings* writes:

This book is begun by God’s gift and his grace, but it is not yet performed, as I see it. For charity, let us all join with God’s working in prayer, thanking, trusting, rejoicing, for so will our good Lord be entreated, by the understanding which I took in all his own intention, and in the sweet words where he says most happily³⁹⁷: I am the foundation of your beseeching. For truly I saw and understood in our Lord’s meaning that he revealed it because he wants to have it better known than it is. In which knowledge he wants to give us grace to love him and to cleave to him, for he beholds his heavenly treasure with so great love on earth that he will give us more light³⁹⁸ and solace in heavenly joy, by drawing our hearts from the sorrow and the darkness which we are in.

And from the time that it was revealed, I desired many times to know in what was our Lord’s meaning. And fifteen years after and more, I was answered in spiritual understanding, and it was said: What, do you wish to know your Lord’s meaning in this thing? **Know it well, love was his meaning. Who reveals it to**

¹⁰ F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., [*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*](#) (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 916.

³⁹⁷ See p. 157.

³⁹⁸ ‘With so great ... more light’ from SS; P, C omit.

you? Love. What did he reveal to you? Love³⁹⁹. Why does he reveal it to you? For love. Remain in this, and you will know more of the same. But you will never know different, without end.¹¹

RACHEL MANN

Rachel Mann. *In the Bleak Midwinter: Advent and Christmas with Christina Rossetti* (pp. 128-129). Canterbury Press Norwich. Kindle Edition.

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One way of approaching this poem's lyric effects is to consider how Rossetti disobeys contemporary poetic conventions. *Contemporary Poetry 101* instructs the beginning poet to avoid abstract nouns. The emphasis is always on forming concrete images in specific settings. By contrast, Rossetti makes 'Love' the frame on which to hold this poem. To do so may leave readers – especially those who find themselves on the margins of faith – asking, 'Whose love?', 'What kind of love?', yet Rossetti more than gets away with her abstraction. The concrete context is provided by another word that for some is equally as nebulous as 'love': 'Christmas'. 'Love came down at Christmas' is simultaneously strange, abstract, yet utterly grounded in the particularities of good poetry: it leaves its readers in the company of Christ. (128-129)

The idea that love might 'descend' or 'come down' from heaven is one to conjure with. It immediately implies that before this incarnational moment, there was an impairment, a lack. Love was, in some sense, absent or less present. The construction invites the reader to re-interrogate the texts of the Tanakh/Old Testament for the traces of God's love and its limits; this, I hope, will lead to a variety of conclusions – not simply that the world was so broken before Christ that it was almost of secondary value. **The paradox of Christianity is that we say, with the writer of John's Gospel, that the Word was**

³⁹⁹ 'What did ... Love' from SS; P, C omit.

¹¹ Julian of Norwich, *Julian of Norwich: Showings*, ed. Richard J. Payne, trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 342.

from the beginning; in the incarnation, however, we see the fulfilment of the Law of Love, its utterly human face made present. If 'Love was born at Christmas' – a phrase that should arrest us with its bold claim, as Rossetti's speaker indicates – at the same time 'Worship we the Godhead'. (129)

As humans, we are caught between what the body can teach us and what symbol reveals, for we are creatures of both flesh and language. In Christ – a body, a particular person called Jesus – **we find our specific, definitive guide into the shape of love.** In Jesus Christ, love is **no longer nebulous or abstract.** We meet love in the gurgle and cry of a baby, but also in the facts of a baby's incapacity and vulnerability. We must change his 'nappy', we must hold him to our breast and feed him. (129)

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THE MUSIC OF THE SEASON

by
Francis X. Maier

12 . 14 . 21

The Pennsylvania state lottery has, as its spokesperson, a talking groundhog. This supersized rodent shows up with his criminal gang of faux carolers every December. They then hijack the airwaves and rework the lyrics of “The Twelve Days of Christmas” into a siren song for gambling. And why not? When the holiday snow glistens, so the marketing hypnosis suggests, everyone can afford to risk a few (or more than a few) dollars on the prospect of winning mythically fantastic wealth. And winning can, and occasionally does, happen, just like miracles. The heart secretly knows that some fairy tales, like a pot of lottery gold, can come true; after all, Jack did pretty well trading his cow for those magic beans. *Somebody* has to have the ticket that transmogrifies his or her life.

Still, it’s annoying. My beef isn’t with the lottery, though. And I don’t really mind the huckster rodent. He’s just another state employee doing his job. It’s the singers who deserve jail time for aggravated assault on a carol otherwise redolent with medieval history. In fact, there’s a whole industry of “holiday” music-abusers who warrant an acquaintance with our penal system. The barking “Jingle Bells” pooch should be put down. The late John Lennon’s song “Happy Xmas (War is Over)” is second only to his other triumph, “Imagine,” in stupefying shallowness. With harmonies by the hideous Yoko Ono and a captive choir of innocent children, it has “guilty” written all over it in any future culture-war Nuremberg trials. May it roast on an open fire with Lennon’s chestnuts. Plus, somebody obviously shredded the “War is Over” memo before it even left the

recording studio.

I'm not a crank. Really. There's room in the Christmas season for plenty of secular fun and nostalgia. Think "Santa Baby," sung by the fabulous and immortal Eartha Kitt; Chuck Berry's "Run, Run Rudolph"; "Santa Claus is Back in Town," by Elvis; Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You"; Mel Tormé and "The Christmas Song"; and—a personal favorite—Elmo and Patsy's "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer."

But aside from Hanukkah, woke capitalist blather about holiday "inclusiveness," and some eccentric, postmodern Druids who think the shortest day of the year (the winter solstice) is actually a big deal, December is really about Christmas—as in Christ-Mass; the nativity of Jesus Christ, messiah. Once upon a time, in a saner, more humane age, the faraway Age of Faith, the joy and beauty of the season didn't need to be manufactured, or hawked, or bought, or turned into kitsch. The joy was authentic. The beauty was organic. Together they shaped an astonishing body of sacred music, including scores of memorable carols; a corpus of transcendent hope and praise that still endures and renews the searching soul.

And here's the good news: The Age of Faith *isn't* over. It's never over in a believing heart. Its soundtrack is available on CD and elsewhere, just outside the junkyard noise and hysteria of modern commerce. Listening to the real music of the Christmas season is how my family spends the December days, and our playlist, in no particular order, is worth sharing here:

I. Joel Cohen and the Boston Camerata

A Medieval Christmas

Noel, Noel! French Christmas Music, 1200-1600

A Renaissance Christmas

A Baroque Christmas

The Camerata, founded in 1954 in Boston, is an early music ensemble led by Joel Cohen from 1968–2008, and

now by Anne Azéma. The albums above are uniformly superb.

2. Richard Westenburg/Musica Sacra (in English; Deutsche Grammophon)

Christmas Carols

A collection of classic carols, marvelously performed.

3. Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles

Advent at Ephesus

A CD of carols focusing on Advent, from a choir of women religious sounding celestial.

4. Christian Desbordes/Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde

Noels Celtiques

Founded in Brittany in 1977, the ensemble has a special focus on promoting Breton culture and language.

Collected here are Breton and other French Christmas carols performed hauntingly.

5. Andrew Parrott/Taverner Consort

The Carol Album: Seven Centuries of Christmas Music

Self-explanatory—and terrific.

6. Anonymous 4

Noel: Carols and Chants for Christmas

The Anonymous 4 was a female *a capella* quartet founded in 1986 and specializing (though not exclusively) in medieval music. They disbanded in 2016 after a brilliant and critically acclaimed career. *Noel* is actually a collection of four Anonymous 4 CDs that can also be bought separately:

Legends of St. Nicholas: European Chant and Polyphony

Wolcum Yule: Celtic and British Songs and Carols

On Yoolis Night: Medieval Carols and Motets

A Star in the East: Medieval Hungarian Christmas Music

7. Edward Higginbottom/Choir of New College, Oxford

Christmas at New College

Classic carols, classic choir, wonderfully done.

8. Sir David Willcocks/King's College Choir, Cambridge

Noel: Christmas at King's

Ditto no. 7 above, but a larger collection.

9. Various recordings/Westminster Choir

Our family's Westminster Choir CD is a 1979 recording and exceptionally beautiful, with a simple but wonderful version of "Of the Father's Love Begotten." But other Westminster Christmas recordings have been released over the years, nearly all of them worthwhile.

10. Amici Cantores of Milan

Puer Natus Est: Sacred Polyphony

A collection of Renaissance Christmas music.

11. Robert Shaw Chorale and Orchestra

Handel: The Great Choruses from Messiah

The best of Handel's *Messiah*.

12. Catriona O'Leary

The Wexford Carols

O'Leary's performance of the carol "This is Our Christmas Day," included here and written during the English suppression of Catholic worship in Ireland, is piercingly beautiful. Once heard, it can never be forgotten. The album's liner notes say it all:

This disc makes a pleasant change from the endless reissues of traditional carols that we are all used to at this time of year. These are based upon *A Smale Garland of Pious & Godly Songs* published in Ghent in 1684 by Luke Waddinge, the Catholic Bishop of Ferns, Co. Wexford, Ireland. Waddinge had been banished to the west of Ireland after the confiscation of his lands. The intention was to offer solace to the Irish Catholic gentry like him who had been disinherited following the appalling treatment of the Irish Catholics by Cromwell during his conquest of Ireland. In 1649 Wexford was sacked, many of its citizens were butchered and the city burned; by 1685 its population had dropped from 2,000 to 400. It is small wonder then that these simple songs have had such resonance for its people ever since.

The origin of the word "carol" tracks back through Middle English and Old French to pagan antiquity; in meaning, it's linked to dances of joy and praise. The birth of humanity's savior—the Redeemer of Man;

God's Word made flesh; the Way, the Truth, and the Life—seems pretty clearly to warrant both.

This Christmas, maybe we should listen accordingly.

Francis X. Maier is the 2020-22 senior research associate at Notre Dame's Center for Citizenship and Constitutional Government, and a senior fellow in Catholic studies at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

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