

Digressio *Express*

ROMAN ROADS PRESS

Highlights from the Classical Education World

CHRISTMAS 2021 • MOSCOW, ID

WELCOME TO THE CHRISTMAS EDITION OF *DIGRESSIO EXPRESS*.

In this issue we take a look at Advent and Christmas traditions spanning the full course of Christian history, and contribute a bit of tradition of our own in the form of a new Christmas carol composed in the style of a sea shanty.

The mission of Roman Roads Press is to help families “inherit the Humanities.” The task of recapturing the rich Western and Christian tradition may seem daunting at times. There is no better time to start and no more enjoyable way to practice than through claiming as your inheritance our culture’s historic Christmas traditions and making them your own. So as you bake a favorite recipe, incorporate an ancient tradition, or sing a brand new carol, you are honing the skill of inheriting the humanities.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

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THEMA

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

by Francis Foucachon

What are Traditions?

Traditions give us anchors to hold onto as time passes and as the pages of the calendar turn. Traditions are constants we can look forward to. Traditions connect groups and communities. They are the instruments to transmit beliefs from one generation to another, helping to tie the past to the present.

In France, the open-air Christmas market is one of these traditions that ties both old and young together, as from year-to-year, grandparents, children, and grandchildren make their annual pilgrimage to a concentration of many sellers’ booths that constitute a real little village called the *marché de Noël*. The *marché de Noël* brings excitement to the Christmas season early on. The tantalizing smells of hot crêpes wafting through the crisp, cold air, the enthusiastic voice of a vendor calling you to come buy some chestnuts cooking on a wood fire, the sweet music of Christmas carols as street musicians from *L’Armée du Salut* (the Salvation Army) sing traditional melodies, the joyous noise of the bigger-than-life personalities of ambulant merchants trying to entice you to come to their stand—all of this is part of the magic of an old tradition.

Not all traditions are equal, but Christmas traditions are among the most wonderful. Although some Christmas traditions started with pagan Roman practices, early Christians turned these pagan customs into glorious traditions with Christian meanings. Here are some of them from my French Protestant heritage.

La couronne de l’Avent, the Advent Wreath

My best childhood memories as I grew up in France in a Protestant family are from the Christmas



Francis Foucachon's Christmas village

season. This period started with *Advent* each year, from the Latin word *Adventus*, which means *coming*. It is a time of waiting and preparing for Christmas. It starts on the fourth Sunday before Christmas when the Advent wreath, *la couronne de l’Avent*, is presented on the breakfast table for the first time. In my tradition, the Advent wreath is made up of fir and pine branches, red bows, and four red candles. The most important idea of the Advent wreath is in relation to the coming of Christ. The four candles sitting in the greenery of the Advent wreath symbolize the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Each candle is lit on each Sunday before Christmas. We have a larger candle in the center of the wreath representing the Kingship of Christ, or sometimes it is white, representing the perfection of Christ.

I remember one Advent when this tradition of the Advent wreath held special meaning. On the morning of Christmas Day, my father-in-law passed

away. Our grief as a family was great, but I assembled my wife and our five children around the table where the powerful symbol of a tradition spoke to us. As I lighted the four red candles of the Advent wreath and then the white candle in the middle, I told my family, “Daddat is with His Savior, King Jesus; he is now without sin, like this white candle symbolizes; he is without pain; he is in the presence of the full Light of glory.” We will never forget that Christmas morning, when Heaven in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ seemed closer than ever, just a step away. When we particularly needed it, a tradition that was already anchored in place was a powerful teaching tool and comfort as it turned our eyes to Jesus.

The Symbol of Light

Jesus is the Light of the world. For centuries, my

Advent & Christmas Traditions

Waldensian ancestors used a candle emitting light in the darkness as their symbol. Their coat of arms was a central candle, representing Jesus, surrounded by seven small stars, symbolizing the seven churches in the book of Revelation. Underneath is the inscription *Lux Lucet In Tenebris—The light shines in the darkness*. Later, as they joined the Reformation movement, they replaced the inscription with the famous cry of the Huguenots, *Post Tenebras Lux—After darkness, light*. In a similar way, the four candles on the top of the Christmas wreath also symbolize the coming of the Light in the darkness. It starts with only a small light, one candle on the first Sunday. But then, more light appears on the second Sunday, increased light shines on the third Sunday, until the full light of the wreath shines brightly on the fourth Sunday. It is a beautiful tradition and a great reminder that Jesus is the only Savior and the true Light of the world. As the Gospel of John says, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness.” We, as children of God and Christ’s ambassadors, are the light of Christ in the world, representing Him.

The Four Candles as Catechism

These four candles are also a short catechism, talking about the four most important stages of the Old Testament announcing the coming of Christ. The first candle is the symbol of the first Covenant between God, and Adam and Eve, as God forgives them and provides for their clothing and covering through the first sacrifice of animals. The second candle reminds us of the renewed Covenant between God and Abraham in view of the promised land. The third one is about God’s renewed Covenant with King David, preparing the way for the King of Kings, Jesus. The last candle represents the teaching of the Prophets who announced that with the coming of the King Jesus, justice and peace will come with a price. The wreath in the shape of a crown of thorns announces Christ’s crucifixion!

The Advent Calendar

The German theologian Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808-1881) is traditionally known as the creator of the Advent calendar. He ran a school for underprivileged children. The children kept eagerly asking him how long it was until Christmas Day. To help them visualize the days as they waited, he affixed four large white candles around the rim of a large wooden wheel to represent the four Sundays before Christmas, and then, in between each of the white candles, he set six small red candles to represent the days of the week. On each day leading up to Christmas Day, the children lit one candle, and each time, they sang a song and read a Bible text. That wheel evolved into the Advent wreath, and the red candles for the weekdays, accompanied by the short daily Bible stories, grew into the Advent calendar that showed scenes each day telling something about the coming of Christ.

As I grew up in a family of seven children who intensely anticipated Christmas, part of the excitement was to open the small window of the Advent calendar each morning before breakfast. Every day from December 1st through December 25th, one member of my family had the treat of opening a window of the calendar. I had my turn every sev-

enth day. All of us couldn’t wait to see what was behind the small window, and each time there was a discovery of a new aspect of the Christmas story. Later, a piece of chocolate was added in front of each picture from the Christmas story. Needless to say, all of us were hoping that our turn would come on the day that had the largest window, since it had the largest piece of chocolate!

Advent Breakfast



A very special breakfast was a part of my family’s Advent tradition each Sunday. All seven of us children were under strict orders to wait upstairs in our bedrooms until we heard Christmas music playing. The melodies of Christmas carols from the record player in the dining room would mean it was time to come out of our bedroom and descend to a table laden with a feast. The shutters were closed to ensure darkness; the only light in the dining room came from the Advent candles in the wreath, and from smaller individual candles that were inserted in a tangerine in front of each plate. We could hear the sound that we heard only once a year, that of the tingling bells of a small merry-go-round. Four delicate angels made out of brass sat above four candles that produced enough heat to make the four angels turn around and around and, with each turn, hit a small bell.

Advent breakfast meant another eagerly-awaited treat—the famous candy from Lyon called *papillotes*, an assortment of all kinds of chocolates such as hazelnut, pralines, milk chocolate, dark chocolate, as well as candied fruits. All of these were enfolded in their characteristic festive gold, silver, and vividly-colored shiny wrappers. A sweet bread with a marzipan center, French croissants, butter, and homemade jam would accompany hot cocoa drinks. The excitement of the first look at the festive table was followed with a series of exclamations of delight, shouts of “Oh, yummy! That looks delicious!”, and lots of laughing.

The Christmas Tree



pagan tradition that 11th-century Christians trans-

formed into a Christian tradition. In Alsace, in the northeast part of France, Christians would cut a small pine tree and decorate it with red apples as ornaments, the fruit itself symbolizing the sin of Adam and Eve, and the red color symbolizing the blood of Christ washing away their sins. Lights and other ornaments came much later. The tradition says that Hélène de Mecklenburg, who married the Duc of Orléans, brought the idea of ornaments on Christmas trees to Paris in 1837, and that Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, brought the concept of lights on the trees in the 18th century. Initially, and in my own home growing up, the only lights on the Christmas tree were real candles! We would light each candle after the midday feast on Christmas Day, and keep them lit for just enough time to sing a couple Christmas carols before quickly blowing the candles out—to avoid a larger unwanted larger flame! We did always have a long wooden pole nearby, with a wet piece of cloth at the end, just in case!

Tradition Upon Tradition

Christmas Eve was a very special time for both my siblings and my parents. Most French Catholics went to the midnight Mass. As Protestants we had our own Christmas Eve tradition. First, the children had an early dinner with something very special, such as *eggs in aspic* (a boiled half of an egg molded in a savory jelly made from meat stock), smoked salmon, quiche Lorraine, and the famous *papillotes*. After dinner, we all went as a family to downtown Lyon to the Reformed Church to attend a pipe organ concert, featuring majestic pieces from Bach. Then, we drove back home for a hot chocolate treat, followed quickly by bedtime, with the growing anticipation in our hearts of the morning and the opening of presents. Right before going to bed, we

each put our slippers in front of the chimney.

While we were getting ready for bed, I remember seeing my mother setting two plates in the living room, and my father getting the Christmas ornament boxes ready. My parents’ tradition was that as soon as we got in bed, they would have a glass of wine, enjoy a lobster or crab dish, and then my father would bring in the Christmas tree and decorate it with old-fashioned ornaments and garlands. He would put the candles in place on the branches of the tree, ready to be lit the next day.

Christmas Day

On Christmas morning, at the signal of a ringing bell and Christmas music, we would all run to the chimney to find our slippers full of goodies, as well as a wrapped present on the top of them. We were not rich and there were seven of us children who had to share any resources we had, but my parents always managed to buy each one of us a nice present, usually a toy we really wanted. It was always an amazing and memorable time of joy and excitement.

After everyone had opened their presents, we jumped in the car to go to a Christmas worship service at the Reformed Church of Lyon. After the service, we picked up my uncle and my two sets of grandmothers and came back home for the Christmas feast. My mother was an amazing and very well-organized cook. In my family, meals were regular, a daily ritual, and a very important aspect of life. Each meal was a daily mini-celebration that gave rhythm, continuity, smoothness, and an ordered flow to life. In normal times and in times of crises, meals helped bring stability and comfort to our lives. But the special meals, like the Christmas

WELCOME TO ROMAN ROADS PRESS

Roman Roads Press is built upon the assumption that education ought to be home-centric.

This home-centered aspect of education affects how we develop and publish curriculum, and assumes the central role of parents as primary educators. Our curriculum is here to help families "inherit the humanities," which means it is not exclusively for the students. Even when taught in a traditional classroom, our curriculum flows back into the home when used with the recitation model (often called a "flipped classroom") that we encourage. We focus on video instruction because it makes learning come alive both in the home and classroom or co-op. Our video courses bring into your home the passion of our teachers who have dedicated their lives to the subject they teach.

If you are new to Roman Roads Press, start with Old Western Culture. The heart of a classical Christian education is a study of the great books. This was the core curriculum that Christians taught and preserved for hundreds of years. It was the education of the early Church Fathers, of the Reformers of the 16th century, and was particularly loved by the American Founding Fathers.

This is a curriculum designed for high school students, but also used by adults, teachers, and even enjoyed by younger students who listen to the stories. It is a guide *through* the great books, and not merely *about* the great books. The term "old Western culture" was coined by C.S. Lewis to describe the books and ideas that were held in common by every educated person until recent times. Our mission is to make sure the next generation receives this education.



Why study these particularly classical subjects? We study the great books to know who we are and where we came from. We study logic in order to think God's thoughts after Him. We study poetry because we are people of the Word, and therefore should be people of words. We study rhetoric because we want to love our neighbor and be effective in God's kingdom. We study Calculus (in the way that we do) because we want to reunite the divorced fields of science and humanities. We study all of this in the light of Scripture.

Welcome to Roman Roads Press, and Merry Christmas!

Daniel Foucachon, Founder

feast, were over-the-top; they were the best!

Our Christmas feast often started with an appetizer of a large, fresh, poached salmon, served on a platter with homemade mayonnaise and small steamed potatoes. Sometimes, the appetizer was a pistachio sausage baked inside a brioche pastry. The main dish that followed was the traditional Christmas goose, *au jus*, and stuffed with chestnuts and apples, accompanied with celery purée, chestnut purée, turnips *au jus*, and fresh green beans. The traditional cheese platter would follow; we enjoyed the best assortment of French cheeses and baguettes. The *grand finale* was the traditional *bûche de Noël*, a Christmas yule log cake. It is a heavenly flourless chocolate cake, rolled into a log with chocolate and whipped cream in every fold, and decorated with confectioner's sugar to resemble snow on a Yule log. The origin of the *bûche de Noël* comes from the Middle Ages, when people would throw a very large log of wood in the fireplace to keep the fire going while attending the midnight Mass. Right after this amazing feast, we would all gather around the Christmas tree to sing Christmas songs.



In the old French, the word *tradicion* meant *transmission, presentation, handing over*.

My parents' Christmas traditions became mine, and my wife has embraced them, adding her own Christmas traditions to our family unit. It is a privilege for each new household to stand on the shoulders of their parents, and to present and transmit to the next generation their Christmas heritage from the past, and at the same time, build their own Christmas traditions, adding or changing certain

parts as they build their distinct legacy. In the last few years, we have witnessed a young generation of Americans canceling their past history and replacing it with a narrative that is politically correct. In particular, Christmas has been robbed of its real meaning. As believers in Jesus, we have the privilege and the duty to maintain good and godly past Christmas traditions. And we have the joy of transmitting them to the next generation, as God's Kingdom continues to grow, in view of *the earth being filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea* (Hab. 2.14). This is what it means to build culture!

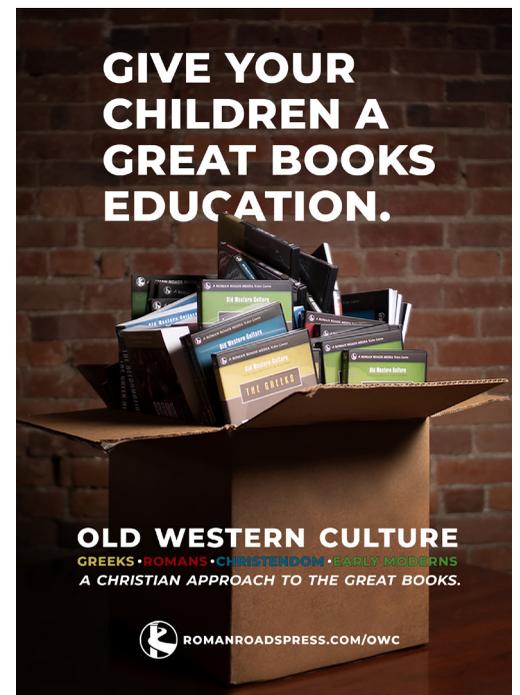
JOYEUX NOËL !

Francis has a trio of passions—his faith, his family, and his food. He was trained to become a chef in the elite world of gastronomy in Lyon, France before being trained as a minister of the Gospel at the Reformed Seminary in Aix-en-Provence. He worked as a chef in France and Switzerland, and later created his own high-end restaurant in the USA. He was ordained in the Presbyterian Church in America in 1987, and ministered as a church planter in France and in Quebec for 24 years. Francis now works with Huguenot Heritage in partnership with Third Millennium Ministries. He and his wife Donna have five children and twenty-four grandchildren.

Building Upon Traditions



The noun *tradition* has a Latin root from the word *trader*, which means to *hand over* or *hand down*.



Inherit the Humanities this Christmas with a special 35% Digressio Express coupon!

See back cover for details.

Old Western Culture Curriculum

Year 1: The Greeks - Homer to Aristotle

Year 2: The Romans - Vergil to Augustine

Year 3: Christendom - St. Benedict to Spenser

Year 4: Early Moderns - Shakespeare to Austen



RECIPES FROM A FRENCH KITCHEN

Lobster Bisque

Preparation time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 40 minutes

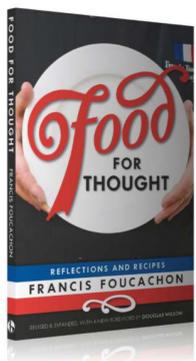
Ingredients

1/2 c. minced onion	2 bay leaves
1/2 c. diced carrots	1 tbsp. minced fresh parsley
1/2 lb. uncooked lobster tail	pinch each of thyme, rosemary, and paprika
3/4 c. unsalted butter, divided	sea salt to taste
1/2 c. brandy	2 tbsp. flour
1/2 c. dry white wine	1 1/2 c. whole milk
2 c. fish stock (homemade or store-bought)	2 tbsp. heavy cream
16 oz. clam juice	fresh parsley for garnish
1/2 tbsp. pure tomato paste	

Instructions

- Melt 1/4 c. of the butter.
- Add the minced onion and diced carrots, and sauté gently for 2 minutes.
- Add the brandy, white wine, stock, clam juice, tomato paste, and spices.
- Add the lobster tail.
- Simmer for 20 minutes.
- Remove the cooked lobster from the liquid.
- Filter the liquid through a sieve, then pour the clear liquid back into the saucepan
- Remove the shell from the lobster, and puree the lobster meat into tiny pieces using an immersion blender.
- Put the pureed lobster meat back into the soup.
- In another saucepan, make a roux: Melt the remaining 1/2 c. butter and gently whisk in the flour. Cook for 3 minutes on very low heat. The roux should never cook long enough to turn brown, as this will cause a sour flavor that will ruin your soup. Add the warm milk to the roux, whisk well, and cook for 3 minutes.
- Pour the roux into the lobster soup, mix well, and cook gently for 10 minutes. Taste, and add some sea salt in necessary.
- Finish by stirring in the cream.
- Serve in bowls with a garnish of chopped parsley.

Discover more recipes in
Food for Thought by Francis Foucachon



Food for Thought represents a lifetime of reflection on the place of food in the Christian life. For pastor and chef Francis Foucachon, food is not just fuel for our bodies—it is about community and family relationships, it is about beauty and flavors, it is about God-given pleasure and art. In *Food for Thought*, Francis also shares a collection of delicious personal recipes and sage counsel for readers considering the restaurant business.

Food for Thought is available at romanroadsmedia.com and on Amazon.

Coq au Vin

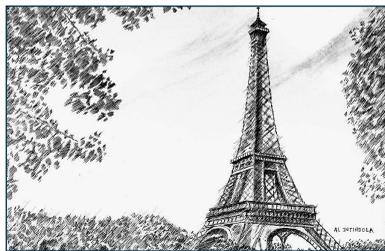
Preparation time: 12 minutes
Cooking time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

3 lbs. free range chicken (white and dark skinless pieces, cut into serving-portion size)
1/2 lb. of thick smoked bacon pieces
1 large onion
8 medium garlic cloves
2 c. chicken stock
3 c. dry red wine
1/2 lb. white mushrooms, diced
3 tbsp. unsalted butter
6 sprigs fresh thyme
4 bay leaves
15 small pearl onions
salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

- In a large saucepan, melt the butter on medium heat.
- Brown the chicken pieces in the butter until golden, about 10 minutes.
- At the same time, in a large cast iron pot, cook the bacon pieces over medium for 5 minutes.
- Remove half of the fat.
- Add the chopped onion, and cook for 3 minutes.
- Add the minced garlic, and cook for 1 minute.
- Add the mushrooms, thyme, bay leaves, pearl onions, wine, and stock.
- Add in the chicken pieces, salt and pepper to taste, and cook for 20 minutes on low heat.
- Serve with noodles.



Crème Anglaise

Preparation time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 40 minutes

Ingredients

3 c. whole milk
9 medium egg yolks
1 c. white sugar
2 tbsp. pure bourbon vanilla

Instructions

- Put a large bowl in the freezer
- Warm the milk in a copper-clad stainless steel or copper-bottomed saucepan.

Crêpes Suzette

Preparation time: 3 minutes for batter, 10 minutes for sauce
Cooking time: 3 minutes per crêpe

Ingredients

Batter	Sauce
6 eggs	6 oranges
2 c. all purpose flour	1 c. white sugar
1/2 c. white sugar	8 tbsp. unsalted butter
2 1/2 c. whole milk	6 tbsp. Grand Marnier liqueur
1 tbsp. pure bourbon vanilla	
pinch of salt	<i>Optional</i>
1/2 c. unsalted butter	Crème Anglaise (see below)
cooking spray	

Instructions

- Combine all *batter* ingredients except the butter, and mix with an immersion blender.
- Strain through a fine sieve to get a very smooth batter.
- Add butter, and stir well.
- Refrigerate batter for 1 hour before cooking the crêpes.
- While batter is in the refrigerator, zest the oranges.
- Cook the orange peel in water for 5 minutes to remove the sour taste; drain.
- Juice the oranges and put the liquid into a pan.
- Add the sugar, butter, and orange zest, and cook slowly for 2 minutes on medium heat.
- Oil a crêpe pan or small flat skillet, preferably with a cooking spray, and heat it to medium heat. (Oil the pan between each crêpe.)
- Using a small ladle, pour enough batter in the crêpe pan to cover the bottom.
- Cook on medium-high heat, approximately 30 to 45 seconds on each side, or until the crêpe is lightly golden.

To Serve

- Ladle a pool of crème Anglaise onto each plate.
- Fold a crêpe in half and put it on top of the cream.
- Put about 2 tbsp. of the orange sauce inside the crêpe, and fold it again into fourths.
- Heat the Grand Marnier in a small saucepan; when hot, light it with a long-handled lighter. While on fire, pour on the crêpe and serve.

- Beat the egg yolks.
- Add the sugar and the vanilla, and mix well.
- Add the egg mixture to the milk in the saucepan and whisk well.
- Cook slowly, stirring with a wooden spoon. Do *not* boil. You will know the cream is ready when it is slightly thick. (You can also cook the cream in a double boiler. This will take longer, but it will be safer; you will be less likely to burn it or boil it.)
- As soon as your cream is cooked, pour it immediately into the frozen bowl to stop the cooking.
- Refrigerate and serve cold.

FIGHT LIKE AN AMATEUR: AFFIRMATION AS CULTURAL WARFARE



by Joshua Appel, adapted from a lecture given to the Alumni of New Saint Andrews College

G.K. Chesterton once said that the true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him. I believe that it is increasingly difficult for our culture to understand what Chesterton means. To understand why love is a more powerful motivator than hate, we must grasp that there are ultimate commitments involved in either posture: one fights out of a fundamental desire to destroy and dominate and the other fights because it is compelled by love to defend the good of the beloved. Think for a moment about all the outrage we've seen in cancel culture over the past year. It embodies one dimension of this perspective. The outrage of cancel culture makes everything a personal insult *because* there is no argument to be had, no discussion is possible. And that's because the philosophy of cancel culture is built upon a view of reality that says the world does not have meaning in and of itself. Meaning is subjective, it's imposed on the world; therefore it's my meaning versus your meaning. The only way we can settle disagreement is by duking it out. If you oppose *my meaning*, you are a threat to me and I have a vested interest in suppressing you, canceling you, destroying you even, but not in having a reasoned conversation with you.

Opposite this is an historic virtue like courage. Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather strength in the presence of fear. It is strength in the presence of fear for a *reason*. Courage steps into the fray because something good is threatened. Courage as a virtue makes no sense without something good to defend, something worth giving your life to protect. Courage is therefore motivated by a love of the good, a love that demands we interpose ourselves between the threat and the beloved. Put simply, these martial postures can be summed up like this: one soldier seeks to *impose* meaning, the other to *defend* meaning.

This divide is also mirrored in education. Universities have largely given up the pursuit of integrated knowledge, built on an understanding that there is unity to the world. They have focused instead on a kind of pluralistic utilitarianism resulting in a radical diversity. Things are valuable insofar as someone values them and finds them useful. Thus the goal of education is increasingly the imposition of desire on the world to achieve the ends that I want rather than the discipline of my desires toward the *telos* of the good which is outside of me.

This shift has been accompanied by a parallel change in what it means to be fulfilled as a human being. I believe we are currently raising a generation of young people who have lost the ability to know the meaning of their actions apart from personal gratification. They don't understand what their actions mean apart from the satisfaction of their own desires. Expressive individualism sees meaning not in what *is* or what *ought to be* but only in what *I want something to be*. Human freedom and flourishing is understood to be getting what I want rather than being free to do what I ought. If we want to contest this, if we want to raise up genuinely counter-cultural men and women who both know what *is* and what *must be done*, who are both wise and courageous, I believe we must begin by understanding the power of true delight—that is love rooted in affirmation. Put simply, affirmation is joy in the good of God's creation.

Delight is an outward action because affirmation points away from the self. The word affirmation means to “strengthen or to confirm a thing.” It's saying “yes” to a thing's being. Affirmation is being delighted with someone or something: with God and His perfections, a Renoir, a vase of flowers, a 2005 Bordeaux, a Bach fugue, a game of baseball, or a bowl of gumbo. Properly understood delight is a response to the worth or goodness of the beloved, *it's directed outward*. In his wonderful book *The Supper of the Lamb*, Father Capon notes that we often use the word amateur for a person who is not very competent at something, but its original sense comes from the Latin, *amare*, to love. Amateurs do what they do for the *love of the thing*, not for the gain that they receive in pursuing it. In this sense the amateur is the one who responds to the world with love. This of course implies that the world is worthy of love. To be an amateur then is to affirm that the world is good and worthy of affection, and Capon says that this love of what is good compels the amateur to act and to speak. It's love that drives him, and so he studies and he ponders and he speaks and he acts because he loves what is good. This is why Father Capon begins *The Supper of the Lamb* by encouraging a long session with an onion. Take an onion, sit down, and spend an hour (or longer) getting to know it. Capon rhapsodizes about just how odd and wonderful onions are—their beautiful shape, the fact that they are almost translucent, made mostly of water, the fact that they are layered and they can peel open. Why does he spend a chapter extolling a confrontation with an onion? The reason is that “man's real work is to look at the things of the world and to love them for what they are. That, after all, is what God does and man was not made in God's image for nothing.”

What's the alternative? Listen again to Capon: “Every time [man] diagrams something, instead of looking at it, every time he regards not what a thing is but what it can be made to mean to him—every time he substitutes a conceit for a fact—he gets grease all over the kitchen of the world. Reality slips away from him; and he is left with the oldest monstrosity in the world: an idol. Things must be met for themselves. To take them for their meaning is to convert them into gods—to make them too important, and therefore to make them unimportant altogether. Idolatry has two faults. It is not only a slur on the true God; it is also an insult to true things.” Idolatry is the imposition of meaning; what a thing can be made to mean to me. This is the tragic legacy of Modernity and Postmodernity. Meaning is not something given, it is something *made by us*. Meaning comes from human nature, not from God. It is therefore imposed, not received. Nietzsche was willing to take this to its logical conclusion: because there is no God, meaning and goodness as objective realities do not exist, only the imposed desires of the individual.

The Biblical view of creation maintains that things are precious *before* they are contributory, they have meaning *before* they are useful to us. They are useful to us precisely because God makes them meaningful. Modernity says that things are precious *if* they are contributory and I'm the one who decides *how* and *when* and *if* they contribute at all.

The price of this supposed “freedom”, of untethering the world from the One Who made it and from His purposes for it, is the loss of the capacity for joy. Joy isn't a simple feeling like happiness, joy has *reasons*. It is a response to God's goodness in creation, to the way things really are. The Biblical view of creation affirms that there is meaning to the world long before I show up to appreciate it. In Genesis, man was created on day six, not day one.

This is why affirmation is the heart of biblical culture. The word *culture* comes from Latin and it means *cultivation of the earth*, literally *cultivation of soil*. That's what culture is, it's cultivating the earth that God has given. It's receiving and developing the world He made and it's glad submission to the meaning he gave it. It points back to God's original commission to Adam to cultivate and guard the garden. The tasks of cultivating and protecting both assume the value and meaning of what God gave Adam. It's all predicated on the fact that God made a world full of meaning, and Adam's job was to search it out, to learn about it, to understand it, to protect it, to give his life for it, so that it could flourish and grow into greater glory. That's where culture making begins: by studying and serving and guarding what God has given. And it's only men and

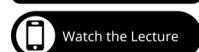


women who have learned to love and delight in the world as it is given by God and not for *what it can be made to mean to them* who will have the courage to stand and to protect what they love when evil men try to take it away. Christians who love things for what they are, for what God made them to be, will be potent in the defense of those things. And that is why Chesterton said the true soldier fights, not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him.

Following Father Capon, if we love onions, if we love onions truly *for what they are*, we will also love children, we will love marriages, we will love being a man or being a woman, we will love creativity, and we will love the study of the world. The deeper we go into creation with grateful hearts, the more we see of God's glory. Next to Him, creation is our dearest friend. Loving it well creates real gusto and zeal in the hearts of God's people to create cultures that are rich and vibrant and full of life. Therefore, to be truly potent, Christian cultural leadership must be rooted in the love of what is good. Instilling this kind of love and the freedom it entails is the purpose of all true and faithful education.

Joshua Appel (M.A., Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando) is a pastor at Trinity Reformed Church. Pastor Appel is also a part-time Fellow at New Saint Andrews College. He and his wife, Sara, who is the church's youth choir director, have seven children, Blaise, Ella, Merry Blythe, Giles, Magdalen, Nils, and Ila Pearl.

Scan the QR code to watch the full lecture on YouTube.



ADVENT THROUGH THE AGES: THE O ANTIPHONS

by Dr. Glenn Sunshine

As Christmas approaches, I always find myself connecting to the past, both my family's history and beyond that to the more distant history of the Church through the ages. Perhaps I do that because the theme of Advent (the season of the Church year that begins four Sundays before Christmas) is waiting for God to fulfill his promise to save his people.

We think back to the centuries the people of Israel waited for the coming of the Messiah, and we look ahead to Jesus' return and remember the centuries the Church has longed for his coming. And pondering those long centuries of waiting gives me a feeling of connection with the past and makes me want to join in with the history and practices of those who like me are looking ahead in hope for Jesus' return.

In line with this, I'd like to introduce you to the O Antiphons, an Advent practice that goes back at least to the eighth century and possibly to the beginning of the sixth century or even earlier.

An antiphon is a short response recited or sung during a Church service after a Psalm or Cantic (i.e. a scriptural song not part of the Psalms). The O Antiphons were recited after the Magnificat (the Song of Mary, Luke 1:46-55) during the Vespers service (Evening Prayer) each evening from December 17 to December 23, the seven days preceding Christmas. One antiphon is recited each night. They are called the O Antiphons because each begins with "O," followed by a name for the Messiah drawn from the book of Isaiah, supplemented with other Scriptures.

The O Antiphons are an acrostic. If you take the first letter of each of the names of the Messiah in

the antiphons in order and then read it backwards, it forms the Latin words *ero cras*, which means "tomorrow, I will be [there]." Since the last antiphon is recited on Christmas Eve, the acrostic is a clever and subtle way of signaling the end of Advent and the arrival of the One predicted by Isaiah and the other prophets and described in the antiphons.

The O Antiphons are also the basis for the hymn "O Come, O Come, Emanuel." The hymn was originally composed in Latin and was first published in the *Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum*. Only five of the seven antiphons were in the first edition; additional verses were added and by 1878 all seven antiphons were included.

A Latin version of the hymn was translated into English in 1844 by John Mason Neale. Since the final two verses had not yet been written, most versions of the hymn only have four or perhaps five verses. Eventually, the two missing verses were translated into English as well. The melody we use for the hymn first appeared in the *Hymnal Noted* in 1851. Thomas Helmore, the compiler of the hymnal, claimed the melody came from "a French missal in the National Library, Lisbon," but if it did, no one has been able to find it since. This has led many to suspect that Helmore composed it himself in the style of a chant.

"O Come, O Come, Emanuel" has a tremendous amount of meaning to me personally, as it helped me get through the death of my beloved father-in-law just before Christmas twenty years ago. I wrote about that in the article, "Death at Christmas." I'd encourage you to read that piece, particularly if you are mourning the loss of a loved one this Christmas.

The following are the O Antiphons for each day

in Latin and English, the corresponding verses of "O Come, O Come, Emanuel" in Latin and English (note that they are in a different order from how we usually sing it), and some of the Scripture verses that the antiphons reference. I would encourage you to join with the Church through the ages in using these in your personal worship on these days.

I recommend reading the Antiphon to understand what it is saying, then spend some time reading and meditating on the scriptural texts. Then pray the Antiphon in light of your reading of the Scriptures and end by singing the verse of the hymn.

Spending time with these Scriptural texts is a powerful way to prepare you for Christmas and will give you a greater appreciation of just who it is that was born on that night in Bethlehem. And praying the antiphons and singing the hymn will help connect you with the people of God in all times and in all ages who have prayed and sung these very same words to the honor and glory of their Savior.

Glenn Sunshine (PhD) is a former Professor of History at Central Connecticut State University and a Senior Faculty Member of the Colson Fellows. An award-winning author, Glenn has published books, articles and book chapters on history, theology, and culture, online and on both sides of the Atlantic. His book *Why You Think the Way You Do: The Story of Western Worldviews from Rome to Home* (Zondervan, 2009) received the 2006 Acton Institute Book Grant.

This article was originally published at breakpoint.org

SEVEN DAYS OF O ANTIPHONS

December 17:

- Isaiah 11:2-3; 28:29
- Proverbs 8:1-36
- John 1:1-5
- 1 Cor. 1:24

O Sapientia, quae ex ore Altissimi prodisti, attingens a fine usque ad finem fortiter, suaviter disponensque omnia: veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiae.

O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care:

Come and show your people the way to salvation.

Veni, O Sapientia, quae hic disponis omnia, Veni, viam prudentiae ut doceas et gloriae. Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel nascetur pro te Israel!

(2) O Come, Thou Wisdom, from on high, and order all things far and nigh; to us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

December 18:

- Isaiah 33:22; 63:11-12

- Exodus 3:2; 24:12
- Micah 6:4
- Acts 7:30-31

O Adonai, et dux domus Israel, qui Moyse in igne flammae rubi apparuisti, et ei in Sina legem dedisti: veni ad redimendum nos in brachio extento.

O Sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain: Come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.

Veni, Veni, Adonai, qui populo in Sinai legem dedisti vertice in maiestate gloriae. Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel nascetur pro te Israel!

(3) O Come, O Come, Thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai's height in ancient times didst give the law, in cloud, and majesty, and awe. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

December 19:

- Isaiah 11:1, 10; 52:15
- Romans 15:12

O Radix Jesse, qui stas in signum populorum, super quem continebunt reges os suum, quem gentes deprecabuntur: veni ad liberandum nos, jam noli tardare.

O Root of Jesse, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; kings stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you.

Veni, O Iesse virgula, ex hostis tuos ungula, de spectu tuos tartari educ et antro barathri. Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel nascetur pro te Israel!

(4) O Come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free thine own from Satan's tyranny. From depth of Hell they people save and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

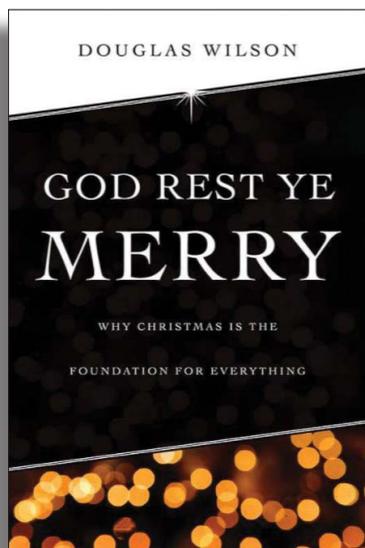
December 20:

- Isaiah 9:1-2; 22:22
- Matthew 4:16; 16:19
- Luke 1:79
- Revelation 3:7

O Clavis David, et sceptrum domus Israel, qui aperis, et nemo claudit; claudis, et nemo aperuit: veni, et educ vincitum de domo carceris, sedentem in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel, controlling at your will the gate of heaven: Come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death; and lead your captive people into freedom.

READINGS FOR ADVENT



"Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her king"—we sing the words, but do we believe them?

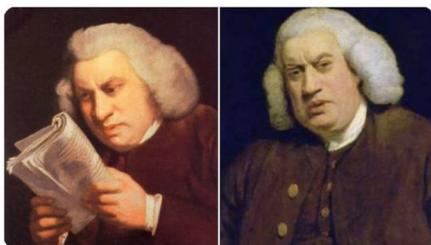
The repetition of Christmas traditions can appear to dull the powerful nature of the holiday. *God Rest Ye Merry* is meant to rekindle the Christian's understanding of Advent on every front, from politics to shopping to uproarious celebration. Pastor Douglas Wilson critiques false reasons for the season (and false objections to it), teaches the importance of Israel in Christmastime history, explains why nativity sets should have Herod's soldiers (and how Santa Claus once punched a man in the face at a church council), offers the Enlightenment Assumptions Detector test as a guide to understanding Christmas symbolism, and much more. The last section contains a read-aloud meditation and prayer for each day of Advent, making *God Rest Ye Merry* an excellent tool for cultivating a deep family love of Christmas.

God Rest Ye Merry is available at canonpress.com and on Amazon.

CLASSICAL CLICKBAIT

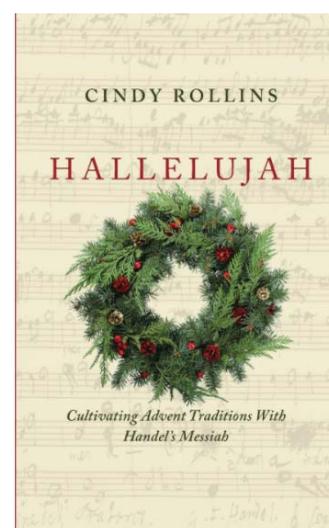
Follow [facebook.com/classicalclickbait](https://www.facebook.com/classicalclickbait) or you'll be mad to miss it!

When the examiner gives you your sight reading and it has 5 sharps.



FAMILY TRADITIONS become established, sometimes quite by accident and sometimes because "we've always done it that way." But the best family traditions are thoughtfully cultivated. With *Hallelujah: Cultivating Advent Traditions With Handel's Messiah*, Cindy Rollins leads the way in building a rich Advent tradition for you and your family. Inside you will find:

- Weekly Scripture passages, hymns, and poems,
- Daily *Messiah* listening schedule with background information from Greg Wilbur
- An overview of the church calendar by Thomas Banks
- Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany recipes, and
- Suggestions for celebrating the Advent feasts of St. Nicholas and St. Lucia.



Cindy also invited four of her friends to share how they celebrate Advent with their own families.

Hallelujah: Cultivating Advent Traditions With Handel's Messiah is available on Amazon.

*Veni, Clavis Davidica, regna reclude caelica,
fac iter tutum superum, et claude vias inferum.
Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel nascetur pro te Israel!*

(5) O Come, Thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home,
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel!

December 21:

- Isaiah 9:1-2; 58:8; 60:18-20
- Malachi 4:2
- Luke 1:78-79
- John 8:12
- Revelation 21:23-25; 22:16

*O Oriens, splendor lucis aeternae,
et sol justitiae:
veni, et illumina sedentes in tenebris,
et umbra mortis.*

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:
Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness
and the shadow of death.

*Veni, Veni O Oriens, solare nos adveniens,
noctis depelle nebulas, dirasque mortis tenebras.
Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel nascetur pro te Israel!*

(6) O Come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer

our spirits by thine Advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel!

December 22:

- Isaiah 2:4; 11:10
- Daniel 7:14
- Romans 15:12
- Ephesians 2:14, 19-20

*O Rex Gentium, et desideratus earum,
lapisque angularis, qui facis utraque unum:
veni, et salva hominem,
quem de limo formasti.*

O King of all the nations, the only joy of every
human heart;
O Keystone of the mighty arch of man:
Come and save the creature you fashioned from
the dust.

*Veni, Veni, Rex Gentium, Veni, Redemptor omnium,
ut salvas tuos famulos peccati sibi conscios.
Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel nascetur pro te Israel!*

(7) O Come, Desire of the nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind;
bid every strife and quarrel cease
and fill the world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel!

December 23:

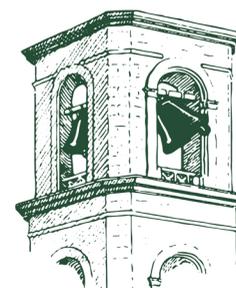
- Isaiah 7:14
- Matthew 1:23

*O Emmanuel, Rex et legifer noster,
expectatio gentium, et Salvator earum:
veni ad salvandum nos,
Domines, Deus noster.*

O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver,
desire of the nations, Savior of all people:
Come and set us free, Lord our God.

*Veni, Veni, Emmanuel captivum solve Israel,
qui gemit in exsilio, privatus Dei Filio.
Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel nascetur pro te Israel!*

(1) O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel!



FOR COUNTLESS YEARS THE DRAGON ROARED A New Carol

by Mark Reagan & Christiana Hale

The sea shanty is everywhere it seems, even in Christmas carols like this new one, *For Countless Years the Dragon Roared*. COVID-19 lockdowns apparently helped this folk genre swell to a new peak. People, sequestered at home, apparently hankering for the company of their mates and raising a glass, suddenly united in song. And so came about the TikTok *Wellerman* phenomenon you may have heard about.

We are proud to say the shanty resurgence crested in Moscow, Idaho a good six months before it did in other quarters. Perhaps you have seen the videos or have sung *Ever and Aye* or *To the Word*. The impetus of these songs was to give Christians something to sing in the commonplace of household chores—a Christian work song, if you will.

Shanties were work songs for sailors, helping them coordinate their movements in hoisting cargo and weighing anchor. The Christian home is a bustling place, with lots of daily work to be done. If God desires we glorify Him even in the mundane activities of eating and drinking, why not accompany our domestic activity with something we already know He likes? Singing. Thus the sacred shanty was born.

One advantage of the shanty style, its quintessential feature, really, is that these are songs sung by men. And part of their jaunty appeal comes from their masculinity. They tend to be in minor keys, for one thing. Their rhythmic component is bodily, earthy, rather than smooth or other-worldly. They are songs that accompany movement.

Reading over Christiana Hale's verses and considering what music would best suit her text, it seemed that these qualities (the masculine, the earthy) were the natural fit. As a Christmas song, the topic is the Incarnation and therefore the earthy is well in bounds. Many Christmas carols embody

a visceral quality, especially old Latin ones like *Gaudete Christus est natus*, *Personant hodie*, and *Puer natus in Bethlehem*. If you don't know these carols, look them up. They're a lot of fun and worth knowing. In the new carol, the tenor melody supplies the masculine aspect. (Yes, the tune is in the soprano part too, but the sopranos are following the tenors, not the other way around.)

Hale's text is a classic retelling of Redemption history. It borrows from myth—stories like *Beowulf* and the *The Faerie Queene*, stories of merry knights and sulfur-spewing dragons. To match the ancient grandeur of these tales, a quasi-medieval music is devised.

What stands out in this text, something I really like, is the fight between Christ and Satan—a topic atypical of Christmas songs. Some carols are fixated merely on the events of Christ's birth, songs like *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* or *When Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night*, great songs, don't get me wrong. Meanwhile, others like *Silent Night* or *Away in a Manger* are somewhat quaint, focusing on the child Jesus. (Sweet infant indeed He was, though His nativity is ensconced in mystery, awe, and wonder!)

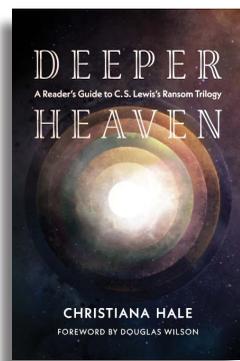
Hale in fact does some of both. Like the gospel accounts, her text reads like a history, but comes to focus not on shepherds, a manger, and a star but on that "strange and dreadful strife/ When life and death contended" (Martin Luther, *Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands*). Furthermore, the sweetness of a child's Christmas, the "sleep in heavenly peace," is there too, but not in sweet sentimentality. No, those icicle lights hanging from the eaves of your house are actually trophies of war. Even the foolishness of Ol' Saint Nick and his multitude of elves, hammers tap-tapping, in some way declares Christ's triumph and pokes fun at the defeated dragon.

Enjoy trying out this new carol. Sing it making your cookies, trimming the tree, tidying up for house guests. Or sing it mixed in with other carols that we enjoy just for the kick of singing them. And girls, get your brothers and dads to join in. This song was written with guys in mind.

Merry Christmas!

Composer and conductor Mark Reagan is a native of Michigan. He earned his DMA in choral conducting at University of Iowa (2017). Reagan's principle teachers include Timothy Stalter, Lori Wiest, David Puderbaugh, and Jere Hutcheson and he holds additional music degrees from Washington State University, Michigan State University, and Taylor University. He has held college teaching positions at New Saint Andrews College, Washington State University, and University of Iowa and has taught in classical education for over a decade. His psalm compositions and arrangements are published in the *Cantus Christi 2020* hymnal and two choral anthems with Paraclete Press (2019). Reagan is the Director of Music at Christ Church, Moscow, Idaho. He is married to Corinne and has four children: Claude, Madeline, Phoebe, and Peter.

Christiana Hale (New Saint Andrews College, BA '15, MA '17) spends her days teaching Latin and English to over a hundred energetic secondary students at Logos School, a classical Christian school in Moscow, Idaho. When not teaching or writing works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, Christiana spends time with her parents and siblings, and enjoys the rolling hills of the Palouse and the deep woods of North Idaho. She is the author of *Deeper Heaven: A Reader's Guide to C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy* and is currently working on three books and finishing her MFA in Creative Writing through New Saint Andrews College.



C.S. LEWIS'S Ransom Trilogy, better known as "the Space Trilogy", is a much-neglected and yet critically important part of Lewis's works. It has captivated and bewildered readers since its publication, and though hundreds of books about Lewis have been written, few seek to navigate the maze that is Lewis's "space-travel story."

These books are a distillation in novel form of one of Lewis's favorite subjects, a subject whose melody is woven into almost everything that Lewis ever wrote: the medieval model of the cosmos.

Deeper Heaven is a guide and companion through the magical web of medieval cosmology, ancient myth, and critique of modern philosophies that makes up the oft-maligned "Space Trilogy". A student and teacher of literature and history herself, Christiana Hale will walk you through the Trilogy one step at a time, with eyes fixed where Lewis himself fixed his: on Deep Heaven and beyond.

Deeper Heaven is available from Roman Roads Press at deeperheaven.com and on Amazon.

EXCERPT FROM *DEEPER HEAVEN*

Chapter 11

Strange Counsel: *Maleldil and the Great War*

When Ransom meets the Oyarsa of Malacandra, the Oyarsa tells him the story of the Fields of Arbol before the fall of Satan. He tells him of the Great War, the fight between the angels and the demons when Satan was cast out of Deep Heaven.

And then Oyarsa utters that phrase that is more than a little familiar: "It is a thing we desire to look into." About a page later, the Oyarsa uses the same phrase again: "For that, as I have said, is a thing we desire to look into." While there are innumerable biblical allusions in the Ransom Trilogy, Lewis does not often use such a *direct* quotation from the biblical text. By doing so here, Lewis is writing in big block letters: "THIS IS IMPORTANT." In case anyone missed what the Oyarsa is talking about, in case we didn't realize *exactly* who Maleldil is (God) and who the Bent One is (Satan) and what all this new terminology is pointing towards, Lewis tells us through the Oyarsa. This is the Gospel story. The "strange counsel" and the "terrible things" that Meleldil has done, the things that all the angels

desire to look into, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ: the Incarnation, birth, death, and resurrection of the Son of God.

That God became man, that He took on our feeble human flesh and died on the cross for our sins, is a thing too great and glorious and terrible for us to truly understand. And yet, as men, *we* somehow understand it more than the angels, as only people who have been redeemed by this astounding act can understand it. It has been revealed to *us*. The Gospel has come to us, fallen and sinful men that we are. And the *angels* desire to look into it. How often do we take the Incarnation for granted?

The Incarnation did not affect mankind alone. It changed the shape of *reality*, the entire cosmos. God entered into His own creation. The Infinite Son of the Father now has ten fingers and ten toes. Eternal Truth once dwelt on Earth in our temporal reality in a particular space. Such an earth-shattering event cannot occur without completely overturning the old order and causing a new creation to spring up in its place.

To Corinne

For Countless Years the Dragon Roared

Christiana Hale

DRAGON TEETH, LMD

Mark Reagan, 2021

♩ = 60

F#m C#m Bsus B C#m F#m C#m Bsus E

1. For count-less years, the Dra - gon roared And men would fight in vain with sword. Though
 2. A Grea - ter Might, a He - ro bold, Came thund-'ring down the halls of gold. He
 3. But then, the blind - ed Snake of old Mis - took the plan that would un - fold. For
 4. They die with prais - es on their tongues. The Ser - pent has - n't learned his wrongs. He

A E B E C#m B G# C#m

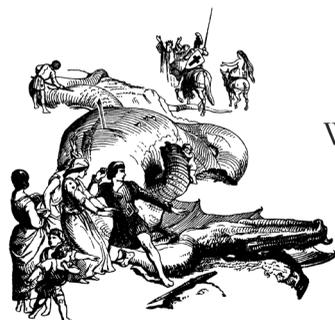
9
 ma - ny sought with might to slay, The Ser - pent's strength grew day by day. In
 came with shouts as soft as cries. He came with vir - gin's lul - la - bies. He
 by the ve - ry DEATH of GOD The Ser - pent's head would bite the sod. The
 seeks to crush the bat - tle hymns But death no lon - ger seems so grim. For

A E A D G A G Em

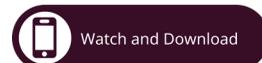
17
 dark - er days, this Dra - gon's breath En - slaved our fa - thers un - to death. They
 fought with wea - pons yet un - known. The Dra - gon scoffed to see this Foe. A
 first blow fell. And ev - er since His saints have fol - lowed still their Prince
 with His RE - SUR - REC - TION FIST Our Lord has crushed the jaws of death. And

C G D A G C D C#m F#

25
 thought to wor - ship stones and beasts While on their souls the Dra - gon feasts.
 MAN? This flesh would quick - ly die. And in a tomb this Lord would lie.
 Slay - ing dra - gons left and right With in - fant songs and Christ - mas lights.
 lit - tle child - ren laugh to see The Dra - gon's teeth hung on a tree.



Watch and listen to this Sea Shanty Christmas Carol, and download the sheet music at www.romanroadsmedia.com/dragonteeth or by scanning the QR Code.



CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS & EARLY SAINTS

St. Nicholas & Stockings



ST. NICHOLAS was born during the third century in the village of Patara in Asia Minor to wealthy parents who were devout Christians. After his parents died in an epidemic when he was quite young, Nicholas dedicated his life to serving God and used his inheritance to assist the poor, sick, and needy. He became Bishop of Myra while still a young man, and was known throughout the land for his generosity, his love for children, and his concern for sailors.

Nicholas was exiled and imprisoned for his faith under the Roman Emperor Diocletian. After his release, he attended the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. Nicholas died on December 6th, AD 343 and was buried in his cathedral church in Myra. The anniversary of his death became a day of celebration, St. Nicholas Day.

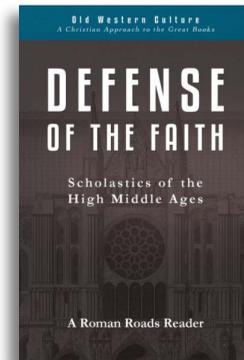


The following story was the foundation for the Christmas tradition of hanging stockings by the fireplace. When Nicholas tossed the bags of gold into the house, it was said that they landed in the daughters' stockings or shoes that were laid out before the fire to dry. This led to the custom of hanging stockings by the fireplace in the hope that they would be filled with gifts from Saint Nicholas.

Excerpt from *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine

And when [Nicholas's] father and mother were departed out of this life, he began to think how he might distribute his riches, and not to the praising of the world but to the honour and glory of God. And it was so that one, his neighbour, had then three daughters, virgins, and he was a nobleman: but for the poverty of them together, they were constrained, and in very purpose to abandon them to the sin of lechery, so that by the gain and winning of their infamy they might be sustained. And when the holy man Nicholas knew hereof he had great horror of this villainy, and threw by night secretly into the house of the man a mass of gold wrapped in a cloth. And when the man arose in the morning, he found this mass of gold, and rendered to God therefore great thankings, and therewith he married his oldest daughter. And a little while after this holy servant of God threw in another mass of gold which the man found, and thanked God, and purposed to stay awake for to know him that so had aided him in his poverty. And after a few days Nicholas doubled the mass of gold, and cast it into the house of this man. He awoke by the sound of the gold, and followed Nicholas, who fled from him, and he said to him: "Sir, flee not away so but that I may see and know thee." Then he ran after him more hastily, and knew that it was Nicholas; and immediately he knelt down, and would have kissed his feet, but the holy man would not, but required him not to tell nor discover this thing as long as he lived.

Read more stories of St. Nicholas in Old Western Culture's *Defense of the Faith* reader



Defense of the Faith immerses students into one of the most misunderstood periods of history. Start by learning about Anselm's theological defense of the faith as he explains his ontological argument for the existence of God. Through Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, learn about

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St. Boniface & the Thunder Oak



ST. BONIFACE was born in 675 in Wessex, England. He is often called the Apostle of Germany for his role in the Christianization of that country.

Named Winfrith by his parents, he studied in Benedictine monastery schools and became a monk, dedicating his life to praying, teaching, and studying. After 30 years he left the monastery to do mission work on the Continent primarily with the Frisian Saxons, but he was rebuffed by their king, Radbod.

In 718 he made a pilgrimage to Rome. Pope Gregory II changed Winfrith's name to Boniface, meaning "doer of good", and gave him a mission to spread the Gospel to the pagans east of the Rhine in Germany. Boniface spent the next 30 years in Germany, preaching, establishing monasteries, and reforming the Frankish clergy, but he never abandoned hope of converting the Frisians. Finally, in 754 he returned to Frisia but was killed by

armed robbers along with all his companions. He was buried in the monastery at Fulda.



During his missionary work in Germany, Boniface was confronted with many pagan rituals. One of them involved the worship of the Thunder Oak, an oak dedicated to the god Thor, and the sacrifice of a human child as part of the ceremony. Boniface purposed to destroy the oak tree and convert the pagans. The following excerpt tells how Boniface chopped down the oak tree and converted the pagans. There are different versions that continue the tale. Some say that Boniface planted a fir tree in the oak tree's place; others say that a fir tree grew spontaneously in the same spot; and still others say that a fir tree was already growing behind the oak tree. Regardless of the fir tree's origin, St. Boniface used the fir tree as a means of evangelization, pointing to the evergreen leaves as symbol of everlasting life and its top pointing up to the heavens as pointing to God.

Excerpt from *The Life of St. Boniface* Chapter VI by Willibald of Mainz

Now at that time many of the Hessians, brought under the Catholic faith and confirmed by the grace of the sevenfold spirit, received the

laying on of hands; others indeed, not yet strengthened in soul, refused to accept in their entirety the lessons of the inviolate faith. Moreover some were wont secretly, some openly to sacrifice to trees and springs; some in secret, others openly practised inspections of victims and divinations, legerdemain and incantations; some turned their attention to auguries and auspices and various sacrificial rites; while others, with sounder minds, abandoned all the profanations of heathenism, and committed none of these things. With the advice and counsel of these last, the saint attempted, in the place called Gaesmere, while the servants of God stood by his side, to fell a certain oak of extraordinary size which is called, by an old name of the pagans, the Oak of Jupiter (the Latin rendering of the Teutonic Thor). And when in the strength of his steadfast heart he had cut the lower notch, there was present a great multitude of pagans, who in their souls were most earnestly cursing the enemy of their gods. But when the fore side of the tree was notched only a little, suddenly the oak's vast bulk, driven by a divine blast from above, crashed to the ground, shivering its crown of branches as it fell; and, as if by the gracious dispensation of the Most High, it was also burst into four parts, and four trunks of huge size, equal in length, were seen, unwrought by the brethren who stood by. At this sight the pagans who before had cursed now, on the contrary, believed, and blessed the Lord, and put away their former reviling. Then moreover the most holy bishop, after taking counsel with the brethren, built from the timber of the tree a wooden oratory, and dedicated it in honor of Saint Peter the apostle.

St. Francis & the First Nativity



ST. FRANCIS was born in Italy in 1181. He enjoyed a rich and carefree life growing up due to his father's wealth as a cloth merchant, and he became the leader of a group of young people known for their drinking and partying.

Francis dreamed of glory and wanted to be a knight. He got his chance when Assisi declared war on the nearby town of Perugia and he joined the army. However, Francis was captured and spent a year in prison awaiting his father's ransom. After his release, his thirst for glory was not abated and he left to join the war in Apulia. But on the way he heard the voice of Christ calling him home again to a life of poverty and service to God. He returned to Assisi and dedicated his time to solitude and prayer in order to know God's will.

Francis renounced worldly goods and embraced a life of poverty, devoting his life to prayer and preaching. His years of poverty and wandering led to serious illness and he contracted an eye disease that left him almost completely blind for the last years of his life. He died in 1226 and was canonized two years later by Pope Gregory IX.



St. Francis is believed to have begun the tradition of nativity scenes. It is said that he was inspired after his pilgrimage to the Holy Land where he visited the historical place of Christ's birth, and in 1223 he was granted permission by the Pope to recreate the scene in a cave in Greccio, Italy. He set up an empty manger and borrowed live animals, and then invited all of the townspeople to the Mass where he told the Christmas story and delivered a sermon.

Martin Luther & the Christmas Tree

MARTIN LUTHER was born in Eisleben, Germany in 1483. He was educated at the Latin school in Mansfeld and went on to matriculate at the University of Erfurt in 1501, then one of the most distinguished universities in Germany. Luther took the customary liberal arts course, receiving the baccalaureate degree in 1502, and three years later he was awarded the master's degree.



After graduating, Luther chose to study law in accordance with his father's wishes, but he abandoned this career not long afterward to become a monk. The reason for this change was a truly terrifying experience. Luther was caught in a ferocious thunderstorm and, fearing for his life, he vowed to become a monk if he survived. Despite his father's displeasure at his abandonment of studying law, Luther fulfilled his oath and joined the Order of the Hermits of

Excerpt from The Life of St. Francis of Assisi, Chapter X

by Saint Bonaventure

It happened in the third year before his death, that in order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion, he determined to keep it with all possible solemnity; and lest he should be accused of lightness or novelty, he asked and obtained the permission of the sovereign Pontiff. Then he prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise. The man of God stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; many masses were said before it, and the Holy Gospel was chanted by Francis, the Levite of Christ. Then he preached to the people around of the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of his love, he called Him the Babe of Bethlehem. A certain valiant and veracious soldier, Master John of Greccio, who, for the love of Christ, had left the warfare of this world, and become a dear friend of the holy man, affirmed that he beheld an infant marvellously beautiful sleeping in that manger, whom the blessed Father Francis embraced with both his arms, as if he would awake Him from sleep. This vision of the devout soldier is credible, not only by reason of the sanctity of him that saw it, but by reason of the miracles which afterwards confirmed its truth. For the example of Francis, if it be considered by the world, is doubtless sufficient to excite all hearts which are negligent in the faith of Christ; and the hay of that manger, being preserved by the people, miraculously cured all diseases of cattle, and many other pestilences; God thus in all things glorifying His servant, and witnessing to the great efficacy of his holy prayers by manifest prodigies and miracles.



St. Augustine at the monastery in Erfurt in 1505. This oath was the catalyst for launching the Reformation in Europe.

After St. Boniface utilized the evergreen tree in converting pagans to Christianity, evergreen trees became a widely accepted Christian symbol; and in the Middle Ages, "Paradise Trees" began to appear. Paradise Trees were set up on Christmas Eve, the religious feast day of Adam and Eve. They were decorated with apples (and later with balls) to symbolize the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and wafers to represent the Eucharist and thus the Tree of Life.

Martin Luther is widely acknowledged as the first person to bring the evergreen tree into the home and decorate it with candles. As he was walking home one evening, he was overcome by the beauty of the stars twinkling through the trees. Wanting to share this experience with his family, he brought a fir tree into his home and attached candles to it. And thus the Paradise Tree became the Christmas Tree.

Christmas Traditions & Early Saints
compiled by Carissa Hale

O CHRISTMAS TREE

by Glenn Sunshine

THE Christmas season (actually, in liturgical terms, the Advent season) seems to bring out the worst in people. This is especially true of over-punctilious Christians, who see paganism lurking behind every tradition that lacks express biblical warrant.

It is a commonplace among many Christians and pagans alike that the date of Christmas was set to compete with pagan festivals (wrongly, as it turns out), and many also claim the Christmas tree is pagan as well. Some sources (of dubious historical value) claim they go back to ancient Egypt, others to ancient Babylon, still others to Celtic, Roman, or Norse paganism.

Pagan Roots?

Let's take a closer look at the claim that Christmas trees have pagan roots. The argument claims that Egyptians worshiped palm trees and Druids oaks, and these practices led to Christmas trees.

But the chronology makes no sense: the first documented Christmas trees date no earlier than the mid-15th century, A.D., many centuries after ancient Egyptian and Druidical religion had died out. So how did the practice, with all its sinister pagan elements, survive over the centuries?

It didn't.

The connection of Christmas trees to paganism exists only in the minds of those who want it to be true.

On the other hand, the ancient Romans did use evergreen wreaths to celebrate Saturnalia, and for that reason the Early Church did not use wreaths or evergreens as decorations. The Church also refused, for a time, to use candles or incense for precisely the same reason.

Likewise, Yule logs were a pagan custom intended to call back the sun on the Winter solstice, and holly and ivy were pagan symbols of fertility. Evergreens continued to be used as winter decorations in Scandinavia even after the region converted to Christianity, though the practice was reframed in Christian terms as a symbol of eternal life (more on that below).

None of this has anything to do with Christmas trees, however.

Want to read the rest of the article?

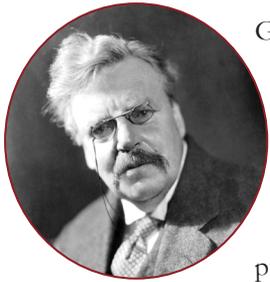
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Gilbert Keith Chesterton (May 29, 1874–June 14, 1936) was a literary critic and arguably one of the most prolific English authors. Over the course of his life he wrote several hundred poems, some 200 short stories, 4,000 essays (mostly newspaper columns), around 80 books (both non-fiction and fiction, including detective stories), and several plays. Chesterton was educated at St. Paul's in London and then went to the Slade School of Art where he became a proficient caricaturist. In 1895 he began working for London publisher George Redway, and then moved to the publishing house T. Fisher Unwin one year later. In 1902 he was given a weekly column in *The Daily News*, and then in 1905 he moved to *The Illustrated London News* for which he wrote for the next thirty years until his death in 1936.

The Wise Men

Step softly, under snow or rain,
To find the place where men can pray;
The way is all so very plain
That we may lose the way.

Oh, we have learnt to peer and pore
On tortured puzzles from our youth,
We know all labyrinthine lore,
We are the three wise men of yore,
And we know all things but the truth.

We have gone round and round the hill
And lost the wood among the trees,
And learnt long names for every ill,
And served the mad gods, naming still
The furies the Eumenides.

The gods of violence took the veil
Of vision and philosophy,
The Serpent that brought all men bale,
He bites his own accursed tail,
And calls himself Eternity.

Go humbly...it has hailed and snowed...
With voices low and lanterns lit;
So very simple is the road,
That we may stray from it.

The world grows terrible and white,
And blinding white the breaking day;

We walk bewildered in the light,
For something is too large for sight,
And something much too plain to say.

The Child that was ere worlds begun
(...We need but walk a little way,
We need but see a latch undone...)
The Child that played with moon and sun
Is playing with a little hay.

The house from which the heavens are fed,
The old strange house that is our own,
Where trick of words are never said,
And Mercy is as plain as bread,
And Honour is as hard as stone.

Go humbly, humble are the skies,
And low and large and fierce the Star;
So very near the Manger lies
That we may travel far.

Hark! Laughter like a lion wakes
To roar to the resounding plain.
And the whole heaven shouts and shakes,
For God Himself is born again,
And we are little children walking
Through the snow and rain.

The House of Christmas

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay on their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honour and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun.

A Child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam;
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads that know,
But our hearts we lost - how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the sky's dome.

This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.

A Child of the Snows

There is heard a hymn when the panes are dim,
And never before or again,
When the nights are strong with a darkness long,
And the dark is alive with rain.

Never we know but in sleet and in snow,
The place where the great fires are,
That the midst of the earth is a raging mirth
And the heart of the earth a star.

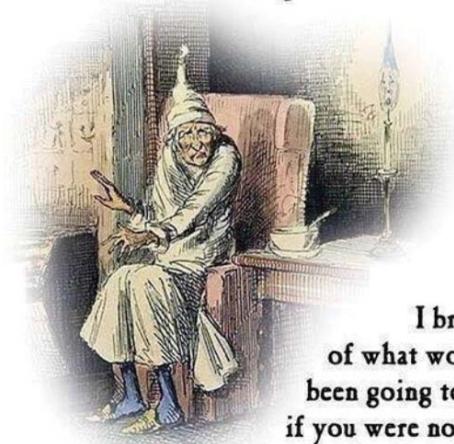
And at night we win to the ancient inn
Where the child in the frost is furled,
We follow the feet where all souls meet
At the inn at the end of the world.

The gods lie dead where the leaves lie red,
For the flame of the sun is flown,
The gods lie cold where the leaves lie gold,
And a Child comes forth alone.

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**I am the Ghost of Christmas Future Imperfect
Conditional, said the Spirit.**



**I bring news
of what would have
been going to happen,
if you were not to have
been going to change your ways.**

ADVENT REFLECTION

from Classic Learning Test

In the social and still more the commercial bustle that occupies most of December, it is easy to forget that Advent is, historically speaking, a penitential season. Admittedly, the preparation for Christmas has rather a different character than the other great penitential season, Lent; even most “high liturgical” Christians in this country rarely fast during Advent, and the accent of traditional prayers and readings, drawing so heavily on Isaiah and other prophets, is more on vigilance than repentance. But, as often as not, that accent gets drowned out by the excitements and stresses of shopping, parties, and arguing about when to start playing Christmas music. We would do well to set some time aside and reflect on what the season of Advent can tell us.

One natural place to start would be with Mary. Her importance to Christmas is obvious enough, and many churches use Scripture readings discussing the angelic visitations of Joseph and Mary at this time of year. The Gospel of Luke then passes to her visit to Elizabeth and the Magnificat (the song of Luke 1:46-55); “Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah,” and so forth. We all know it. But pause for a moment to imagine this period leading up to Christ’s first advent from her perspective.

A young girl—as young as thirteen or fourteen, perhaps, based on first-century marriage customs in Palestine—has just become pregnant, and her fiancé is not the father. He is a decent sort and arranges for a quiet divorce; but this is a rural town of a few hundred people. Everyone would know about the

scandal. Her neighbors, perhaps even her parents, would hardly be likely to believe a story about still being a virgin and the pregnancy being miraculous. Nor was this a society conspicuous for its merciful outlook on adulteresses. It is perfectly possible that Mary “arose with haste” and left Nazareth because she was in physical danger. It would explain a good deal: a teenage girl making her way to a city more than eighty miles away, perhaps on foot and, as far as we know, completely alone. Alone, that is, except for the new life growing invisibly within her. In this season we speak often, and rightly enough, of Mary’s faith, but what arrests me about the story is her guts.

When she arrives, we might expect her to be in a state of collapse—a shivering young woman falling into the arms of her elderly relative, wrung out by both the emotional circumstances of her flight and the physical exertion it must have cost her, especially in the early weeks of pregnancy. What we find instead is a spontaneous psalm of exultation, composed with a fiery beauty that has captivated generations. And before the killjoys come in saying the Magnificat was probably written after the fact and placed there for thematic reasons: while this would have been a natural thing to do in the ancient world and not considered “dishonest,” it is also perfectly credible that a young woman who was familiar with the Psalms could have come up with a poem like the Magnificat on the spot. Or she might have composed it as she was rushing southwards. It is easy to picture her sitting alone by a campfire, thinking, and placing line upon line of verse. Thomas Merton

wrote that “*Alleluia* is the song of the desert,” and that may have been literally true in this case.

There are platitudinous directions we can go with this; there always are: imitate Mary’s courage, periods of loneliness are normal in the Christian life, be kind to single mothers, and so on. Coming up with sententious morals is easy. “We should pause and reflect on the meaning of Advent” is itself a sententious moral. But “something greater than the temple is here”: a reminder of the unique power of Christ, which appears of its own accord, amidst both hostility and kindly incredulity, and sustains us in solitude and danger. Our vigilance is not a gesture of our own power, but a preparation, so that we can recognize the mystery of grace when it comes suddenly upon us. Mundane though it may feel, the appearance of grace in our souls is as nakedly miraculous as the conception of a child without a father, and even if there is much for us to do, that grace grows by its own life, not by our plans or efforts—“not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

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Merry Christmas!

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Crossword Clues

Across

3 "O come, Thou Rod of _____"

5 "Delight is rooted in _____"

6 St. Nicholas was the Bishop of _____

10 Where St. Francis set up his nativity scene

11 These assessments are the only standardized tests taken at home

12 The Apostle of Germany

14 "For countless years the _____ roared"

15 This word means "cultivation of the earth"

17 _____ for Thought (book by Francis Foucachon)

18 Famous cry of the Huguenots (three words)

24 The number of antiphons

25 He is traditionally known as the creator of the Advent calendar (two words)

26 St. Boniface was named this by his parents

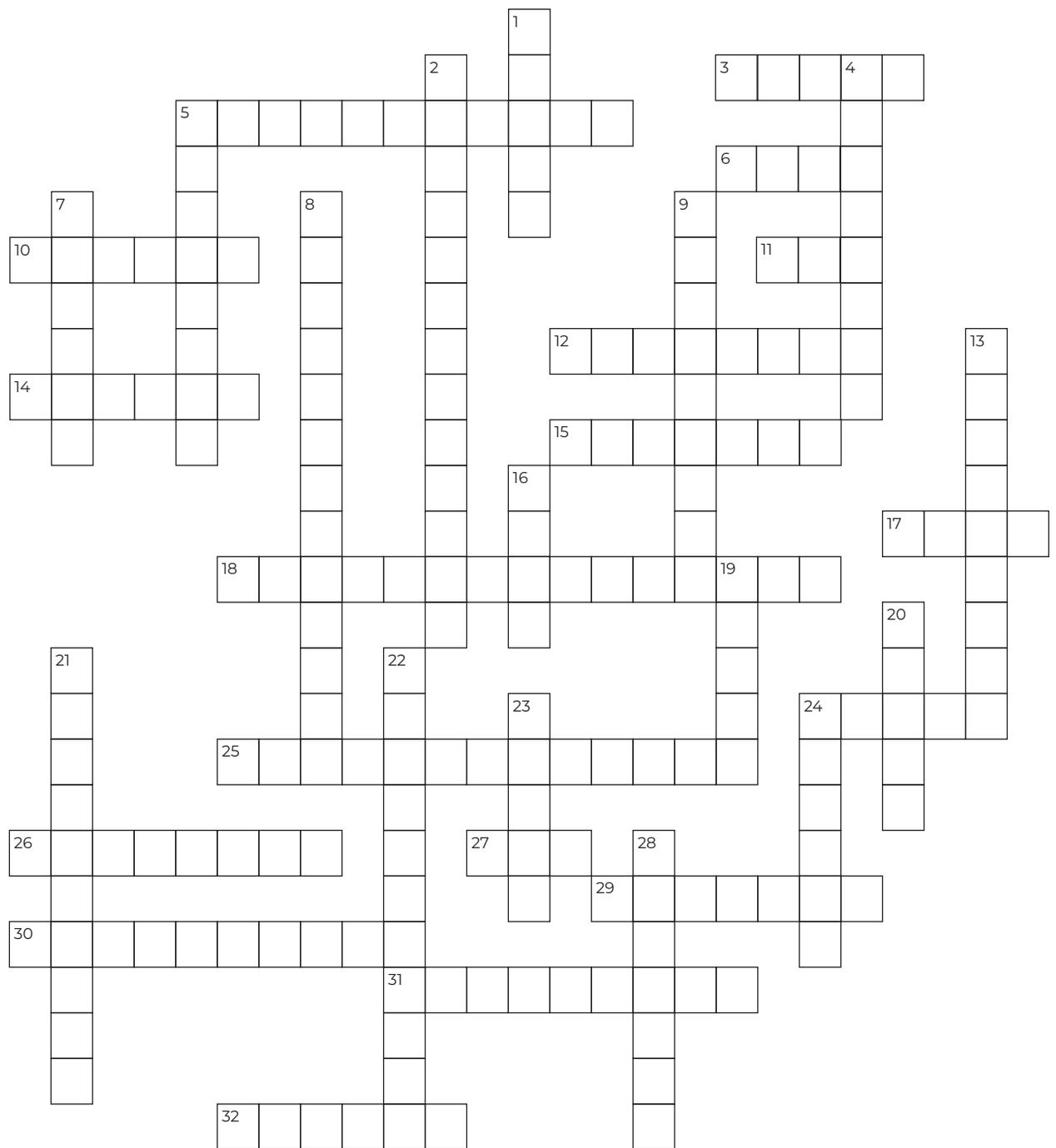
27 "____ is a response to God's goodness, to the way things really are."

29 "Oh, we have learnt to peer and pore / On tortured _____ from our youth" (from The Wise Men)

30 St. Nicholas was imprisoned under this emperor

31 This word means "to hand over or hand down"

32 Christiana Hale's book: Deeper _____



Down

1 Chesterton's middle name

2 These were set up on Christmas Eve, the religious feast day of Adam and Eve (two words)

4 These are work songs for sailors

5 A short response recited or sung during a Church service

7 Martin Luther went to this university

8 St. Nicholas Day (two words)

9 The House of _____ (poem by Chesterton)

13 Christmas Trees were brought to England during this era

16 Bûche de _____

19 O Come, O Come Emanuel was originally composed in this language

20 "The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he _____ what

is behind him."

21 The Song of Mary

22 He wrote the Life of St. Francis of Assisi

23 The sailors' songs are typically in this key

24 The _____ of the Lamb (book by Father Capone)

28 The Thunder Oak was dedicated to this Roman god

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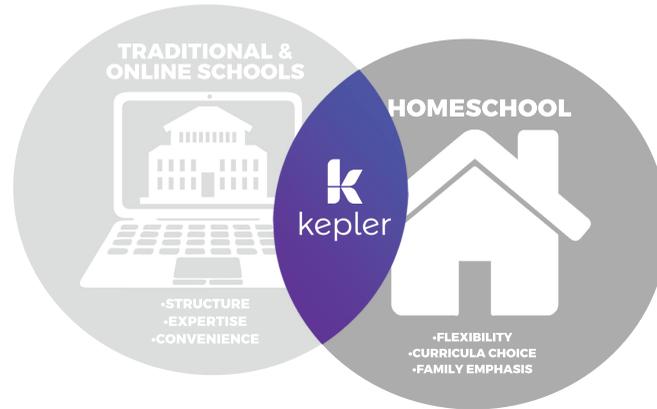
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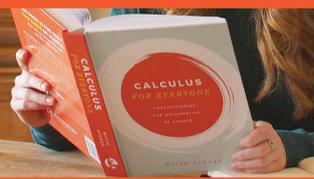
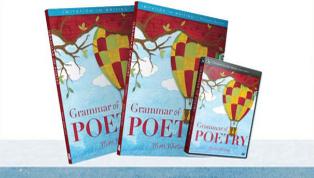
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