



AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that *All the world should be taxed.* ² (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) ³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:;) ⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

The above passage from the Gospel of Luke is one of the most beautiful as well as meaningful texts of the entire Bible. It succinctly proclaims the fulfillment of God's Promise to His Elect from Eden to Bethlehem. So, the Wexford Carol, as well, beautifully expresses the hope and promise of that event which supersedes all previous miracles in the annals of history. The carol is of Irish origin being titled, *Carúl Loch Garman*, and originating from County Wexford. It is often called, in English, *Good People All, This Christmas Time*. This carol possesses all the dignity and reverence fitting for the coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The identity of the author is lost to antiquity, therefore, I ascribe its beauty to God alone as Author. It conveys a warmth of feeling seldom excelled in any musical piece. The English translation is the work of William Grattan Flood (1859-1928) who transcribed the words from a local Irish singer (also unknown in identity). Julie Andrews recorded this carol in 1966 and it appears in the Oxford Book of Carols. Due to its many lines, I cannot expound on each individual verse in the same detail as I have done with other carols; I will therefore render a general discussion of the song. But, the lyrics do, in fact, render the entire meaning and emotion necessary for deep devotion and understanding.

The Wexford Carol

Good people all, this Christmas time,
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done
In sending his beloved son

With Mary holy we should pray,
To God with love this Christmas Day
In Bethlehem upon that morn,
There was a blessed Messiah born.

The night before that happy tide,
The noble Virgin and her guide
Were long time seeking up and down
To find a lodging in the town.

But mark how all things came to pass
From every door repelled, alas,
As was foretold, their refuge all
Was but a humble ox's stall.

Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep
To whom God's angels did appear
Which put the shepherds in great fear

Prepare and go, the angels said
To Bethlehem, be not afraid
For there you'll find, this happy morn
A princely babe, sweet Jesus, born.

With thankful heart and joyful mind
The shepherds went the babe to find
And as God's angel had foretold
They did our Saviour Christ behold

Within a manger he was laid
And by his side the virgin maid
Attending on the Lord of Life
Who came on earth to end all strife.

There were three wise men from afar
Directed by a glorious star
And on they wandered night and day
Until they came where Jesus lay

And when they came unto that place
Where our beloved Messiah lay
They humbly cast them at his feet
With gifts of gold and incense sweet.

Good people all, this Christmas time, Consider well and bear in mind What our good God for us has done In sending his beloved Son. The opening verse provides the introduction and mood of all that follows in the carol. We celebrate CHRISTMAS – not Winter Break, or Winter Solstice, nor Seasons Greetings. We wish for all a Merry

Christmas – not Happy Holidays. Christmas is a Holiday in the purest sense, the word ‘holiday’ deriving from the term, HOLY DAY!

The remaining verses recall to our memories and souls all the beauty and depth of God’s fulfilling Love and Promise that occurred on that eventful night more than two thousand years ago. Mary was indeed a ‘HOLY VIRGIN’ but not immaculate. She was the purest of all women and yet human not unlike other women. All men and women of God should be HOLY. “ . . . ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:45b)

This conveys the greater beauty of Mary and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus is the only man born of woman who is wholly sinless and wholly righteous. Yet, God chose a vessel of flesh and blood as the transport for the Incarnation of His only Begotten Son. There was no room for the weary virgin and her soon-to-be-born child in any of the inns of little Bethlehem bustling with unusual traffic owing to the census. But the kindly beasts of the field - the oxen and the lambs, the goats and the sheep were accepting in their hearts of instinctive love to share accommodation in their poor and wretched stalls. In fact, they were honored above kings and princes to witness the epochal event of all history. Softly the oxen lowed, and excitedly the little lambs wondered at the unusual events of that cold and pristine night on the Judean high desert of Bethlehem. In fact, some of those lambs would, themselves, be sacrificed in coming days at the Temple Passover as a type of the greater once-and-for-all sacrifice that the Baby Jesus would someday make for us.

The precious beasts of the field witnessed all that night, and they saw the Baby Jesus placed in a manger made of wood. This was the instrument for feeding those beasts present, and these attending were perhaps less beast than the whole of mankind who had no room for Baby Jesus. There may have fallen a strange shadow of the wooden cross that fell across the scene that night. The tree provided his first resting place, and the cross of wood would provide His last.

There was a reverent ‘quiet’ that prevailed in the solitude of that night. Strange lights in the heavens and the soft and comforting voice of a baby’s mother marked that night so long ago. But, it wasn’t really so long ago at all for Christ comes into thousands of hearts to abide each day – at least to those hearts whose inns are welcoming to the precious Lord Jesus. I know His love in my heart. I know that I owe a debt to Him I can never, ever repay. If you know Him, you know that He is pure and undiluted Love personified. If not, study the Holy Scriptures to learn of Him just as did the Magi of Persia!