

Christians, Awake!

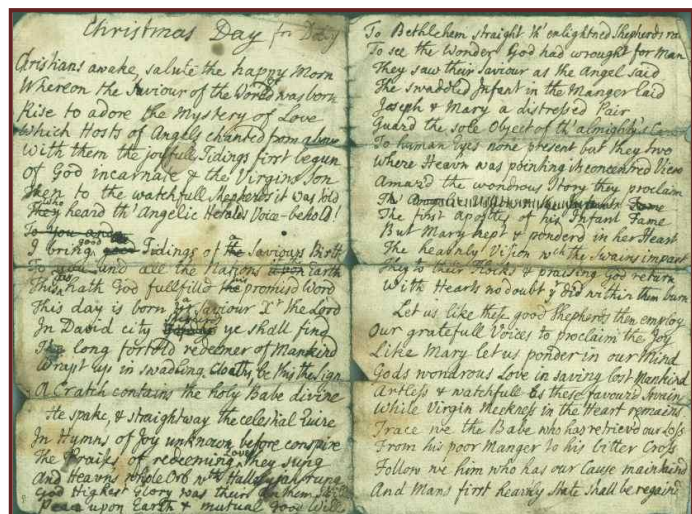
The question was simple: “What would you like for a Christmas present?”

To any young girl, such an inquiry would evoke delighted visions of long-wished-for possessions. But to Dolly, the answer to her father, John Byrom, was: “Please write me a poem.”

So on Christmas morning in 1745, Dolly found on her plate at breakfast a piece of paper on which was written a hymn entitled, *Christmas Day, for Dolly*. The lyrics are famous for the comprehensive quotation of the Archangel Gabriel: “Behold, I bring good tidings of great joy.”

Soon afterward, John Wainwright, the organist of the Manchester (England) Parish Church, wrote a tune for the lyrics, and the title was changed to *Christians, Awake! Salute the Happy Morn*.

On the following Christmas morning, Byrom and Dolly were awakened by the sound of singing below their windows. It was Wainwright with his choir, singing Dolly’s song. Here it is:



Christians, Awake!

*Christians, awake, salute the happy morn
Whereon the Savior of the world was born.
Rise to adore the mystery of love
Which hosts of angels chanted from above,
With them the joyful tidings first begun
Of God incarnate and the virgin's Son.*

*Then to the watchful shepherds it was told
Who heard the angelic herald's voice: "Behold,
I bring good tidings of a Savior's birth
To you and all the nations of the earth;
This day hath God fulfilled His promised Word;
This day is born a Savior, Christ the Lord."*

(more)

*He spoke, and straightaway the celestial choir
In hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire;
The praises of redeeming love they sang,
And heaven's whole orb with alleluias rang.
God's highest glory was their anthem still,
Peace on the earth and unto men, goodwill.*

*To Bethlehem straight the enlightened shepherds ran
To see the wonder God had wrought for man,
And found, with Joseph and the blessed maid,
Her Son, the Savior, in a manger laid;
Then to their flocks, still praising God, return,
And their glad hearts with holy rapture burn.*

*Like Mary, let us ponder in our mind
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind!
Trace we the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss,
From His poor manger to His bitter cross,
Tread in His steps, assisted by His grace
Till man's first heavenly state again takes place.*

*Then may we hope, the angelic hosts among
To sing, redeemed, a glad triumphal song:
He that was born upon this joyful day
Around us all His glory shall display.
Saved by His love, incessantly we sing
Eternal praise to Heaven's almighty King.*

What a wonderful present – a gift for the ages – little Dolly received from her father. And read in what John Byrom wrote the passion of his faith and the love of his Lord.

Perhaps Dolly's request will make your Christmas 2012 a little more special.

– Beecher Hunter