

"O Come All Ye Faithful"

by Frederick Oakeley, 1841

"When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about"

The songs of the Christmas season comprise some of the finest music known to man, and this hymn is certainly one of our universal favorites. Today it is sung by church groups around the world, since it has been translated from its original Latin into more than one hundred other languages. The vivid imagery of the carol seems to have meaning and appeal for all ages in every culture.

The original Latin text consisted of four stanzas. The first calls us to visualize anew the infant Jesus in Bethlehem's stable. The second stanza is usually omitted in most hymnals, but it reminds us that the Christ child is very God Himself!

The next stanza pictures for us the exalted song of the angelic choir heard by lowly shepherds. Then the final verse offers praise and adoration to the Word, our Lord, who was with the Father from eternity past.

For many years this hymn was known as an anonymous Latin hymn. Recent research, however, has revealed manuscripts that indicate that it was written in 1744 by an English layman named John Wade and set to music by him in much the same style as used today. The hymn first appeared in his collection, *Cantus Diversi*, published in England in 1751. One hundred years later the carol was translated into its present English form by an Anglican minister, Frederick Oakeley, who desired to use it for

his congregation. The tune name, "Adeste Fideles," is taken from the first words of the original Latin text, and translated literally means "be present or near, ye faithful."

[Information taken from Amazing Grace by Kenneth W. Osbeck]

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;
(Chorus)

God of God, Light of Light;
Lo, He abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God, Begotten, not created; (Chorus)

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God, in the highest; (Chorus)

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, late in flesh appearing; (Chorus)

Chorus: O come, let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord.