

Heather - Good Christian Friends, Rejoice!

Reflection

While many hymns and carols we sing
were written or composed
in the prolific 19th century,
our next carol,
is old, old
...older than Whit.
Good Christian Men, Rejoice,
has Medieval origins.
Some sources date it as early as 1440
but some scholars believe it to be older than that.¹

In 1582, Theodoric Petri of Nyland,
published a book of Latin and Finnish hymns and songs,
called *Piae Cantiones*
That's right, 1582—which makes this carol,
at least, over 400 years old.

While it remained a staple in Finland and Sweden
it was largely unknown in Britain—until—k
300 years after publication,
in 1853 G.J.R. Gordon brought *Piae Cantiones*,
to John Mason Neale, an Englishman
who had made a name for himself
writing and translating hymns.²
He set the words to the German tune, *In Dulci Jubilo*,
which means 'sweet rejoicing.'
And if you are ever on Jeopardy,
John Mason Neale,
also wrote a book on the history of church pews.³

What I especially love in this carol
would be verse 2,
with its refrain,
Christ was born for this!
While we believe that Christ was born for all of this—
in the hymn, the "this" is
the hint that more is in store than we can see and imagine;

¹ PCUSA hymnal reference

² Bob Thompson's book on carols

³ <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20161220-the-surprising-origins-of-famous-christmas-carols>

that the doors of heaven have been opened;
that we are forever blessed,
and this means endless bliss.

While we aren't there yet,
just singing such enormously joyous things,
that Christ was born for this moment and all moments
makes this hymn a joyous declaration of our faith.

In 1978 with intention of making the carol
more inclusive, the Lutheran Book of Worship
removed the gendered language,
and Good Christian Men, Rejoice became
Good Christian Friends, Rejoice
—and you know what, I've always liked those Lutherans.

Hymn 132 Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Heather's Reflection - Angels We Have Heard on High

So, who knows the Christmas carol,
The Angels in Our Countryside?
It almost sounds like would be
on a Randy Travis Christmas album.
Though Angels in our Countryside
may not seem familiar,
it is however the French Carol
that inspired
Angels We Have Heard on High.⁴

This carol is most often sung
to the tune of G-l-o-r-i-a...
I just thought that was too good to pass up.
Edward Shippen Barnes
is the arranger of the tune
and he served several churches
as organist and choir director.
Among them were:
Rutgers Presbyterian Church, in New York City
and First Presbyterian Church in Santa Monica California.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angels_We_Have_Heard_on_High

The Gloria tune,
has as its most memorable feature,
the chorus, sung in Latin
—Gloria, in excelsis Deo—
Where, as expressed in the 2nd verse,
joyous strain prolongs...
...gloria is fluidly sung in 16 notes,
rising and falling in what is colloquially called
a vocal run.

Gloria in excelsis Deo means,
Glory to God in the Highest
which is a direct quotation from Luke's gospel,
"And suddenly there was with the angel
a multitude of the heavenly host,
praising God and saying,
"Glory to God in the Highest heaven
and on earth
peace among those whom he favors." (Lk. 2:13-14)

James Chadwick, the Roman Catholic bishop
of Hexham and Newcastle
wrote the English translation in 1862.
Though Chadwick used the text of Luke's angelic proclamation,
Luke does not record the angels singing,
but rather proclaiming these famous words.

However, due in large part to this hymn,
religious culture has assumed
that the angels sang their message to the shepherds that night.
I'd say in this instance
it's a-okay for culture to be the winner.

Hymn 113 Angles We Have Heard on High **Closing words**

We started by saying "Sometime all we can do is sing."
And we end by using this story to say
"Sometimes we need someone else to begin singing."

And that's the church – the place where we can be
and we can find the one
who begins the song.

I don't think world isn't prepared for our singing...
What better act of love and joy is there,
than to proclaim with our voices united,
the message of Christmas tidings—the hope of the world is here.

And so, church knowing the Lord has employed
the heavens and the earth,
we will join the chorus to sing our last song,

Heather's Reflection—Love Has Come

This last song,
one of my personal favorites,
has an old tune but new words.
The tune (on flam boo Janette Izabell)
Un Flambeau Jeanette Isabell,
Bring a Torch Jeanette Isabelle
is likely based on a drinking song for a farce,
first performed in 1666.

The original French text
was penned by Émile Blémont,
and is based on a 17th-century Provençal carol.
In the original text,
two shepherdesses, Jeannette, and Isabella,
excited at finding the baby in the stable,
are urged to bring torches.

Bring a torch, Jeannette, Isabella.
Bring a torch, come hurry, and run.
It is Jesus, good folk of the village,
Christ is born, and Mary's calling:
Ah! Ah! Beautiful is the Mother, Ah!
Ah! Beautiful is the Child!

Torches remain a Christmas tradition in Provence,
where children dress up
as shepherds and milkmaids,
carrying torches and candles
to Midnight Mass while singing this carol.

In the late 1990's Ken Bible penned new lyrics for this carol to focus on the theme of love. In his own words, he introduced his reworking of the hymn:

Christmas is a story of Love.
For hundreds of years,
Love had whispered,
"I am coming!
I am coming to be with you
to stay with you forever!"

It was Love celebrated that night
in the skies over Bethlehem with
angels, music,
and shouts of praise.

Love was the shining star
high in the sky,
sent to draw people from far away
to come and worship the Baby.

And Love has entered our hearts.
We can feel it drawing us
to love and worship God.
We can see it gathering us together
to celebrate His coming.
And we can sense it
reaching out this Christmas
to share with the needy all around us.

Christmas is a story of Love,
Love that has come to us,
Love that has brightened our lives;
and Love is Jesus⁵

⁵ <http://lnwhymns.com/Hymn.aspx?ID=34>