

# Noel Nouvelet

Traditional French, Late 15th Century

[MIDI](#) / [Noteworthy Composer](#)

Source: Henry Poulaille, *Bible Des Noël's Anciens* ("Club Des Éditeurs, Édition Nouvelle," c 1958), pp. 61-63.

1. Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons icy;  
Dévotes gens, rendons à Dieu mercy;  
Chantons Noël pour le roy nouvelet,  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!
2. Quand m'esveilly et j'eus assez dormy  
Ouvris mes yeux, vis un arbre fleury  
Dont il issait un bouton vermeillet,  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!
3. Quand je le vis, mon cœur fut resjouy  
Car grande clarté resplendissait de luy  
Comme le soleil qui luit au matinet  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!
4. D'un oysillon après le chant j'ouy  
Qu'aux pasteurs disait : « Partez d'icy  
En Bethléem trouverez l'agnelet »  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!
5. En Bethléem, Marie et Joseph vy  
L'asne et le bœuf, l'enfant couché parmy  
La crèche était au lieu d'un bercelet  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!
6. L'estoile vint qui le jour esclaircy  
Et la vy bien d'où j'estois départy  
En Bethléem les Trois Roys conduisait  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!
7. L'un portait l'or et l'autre myrrhe aussi  
Et l'autre encens que faisait bon senty  
Le Paradis semblait, le jardinet  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!
8. Quarante jours, la nourrice attendy  
Entre les bras de Siméon rendy  
Deux tourterelles dedans un panneret  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!
9. Quand Siméon le vit, fit un haut cry  
Voice mon Dieu, mon sauveur Jésus-Christ  
Voicy celui qui joie au peuple met!  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!

10. Un prestre vint don't je fus esbahy  
Que les paroles hautement entendy  
Puis les mussa dans un petit livret  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!
11. Et puis me dit « Frère, crois-tu cecy?  
Si tu y crois aux cieux sera ravy  
Si tu n'y crois, va d'enfer au gibet »  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!
12. Voicy mon Dieu, mon Sauveur Jésus-Christ  
Voicy celui qui gloire au peuple met  
En trente jours fut Noël accompli  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!<sup>1</sup>
13. Et trente jours fut Noël accompli  
Par douze vers sera mon chant finy  
Par chaque jour j'en ai fait un couplet  
    Noël nouvelet,  
    Noël chantons icy!

**Footnote:**

1. M. Lemeignen, dans sa version, omet le neuvieme couplet et l'avant-dernier y est remplace par celui-ci:

    Et l'autre jour je songeais en mon lict  
    Que je voyais ung enfant si petit  
    Qui s'appelait Jésus de Nazareth  
    Noël nouvelet.

Ce texte est vraisemblablement posterieur au notre.

Cited source for this text is *Grande Bible des Noëls, tant vieux que nouveaux*, Troyes, 1721.

Additional Note in *Bible Des Noëls Anciens*, p. 63:

*Ce Noël figure dans le Manuscrit, Arsenal 3653, qui date de 1487-1490, «  
    S'ensuyvent certains ditèz et chansons faictes en lhonneur de la Nativité Jhésu Christ. »  
    (Je n'ai pu voir ce manuscrit qui avait été évacué pendant la guerre.)*

*Villon aimait ce Noël et l'on en aurait retrouve une copie de sa main dans les papiers  
    qu'il laissa.*

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**Notes**

Keyte and Parrott, [\*The New Oxford Book of Carols\*](#) (1992) contains 13 French verses, with a corresponding 13 English verses; see Carol 188. They note that *nouvelet* comes from the same root as *noël*, and that both denote "news" or "newness." This was a New Year's carol, as opposed to a Christmas carol, with versions dating to the early 1500s. Numerous versions have been found, largely inconsistent. They took their version from the 1721 *Grande Bible des noëls, taunt vieux que nouveaus*. Even so, they made alterations to several of the French verses, according to their notes, which contain additional material to which the reader is referred.

English translations appeared as early as the 17th and 18th centuries; translations are still being made as recently as 1998.

The tune itself, in a Dorian mode, echoes in its first five notes the Marian hymn [\*Ave, Maris Stella Lucens Miseris\*](#).

Translations include:

- *Christmas Comes Anew* (Ehret and Evans, [The International Book of Carols](#) (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Walton Music Corp., 1963); there may also be public domain versions under this name, however, I have not yet located one.
- [Noel Nouvelet, Sing We A New Noel](#) (Translator Unknown)
- *Noël nouvelet, sing we this new Noël* (Keyte and Parrott, [The New Oxford Book of Carols](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- *Noel! A New Noel!*
- [Noel, Noel, Noel](#) (Translation by Mrs. K. W. Simpson, circa 1930)
- *Nowell, Sing Nowell* (Translation by John Rutter, copyright 1969; see [Carols for Choirs 2: 50 Christmas Carols for Christmas and Advent](#) (London: Oxford University Press, 1970)
- *Sing We Now*
- *Sing We Now Of Christmas: [Version 1](#) and [Version 2](#)*. Traditional English, Translator Unknown, circa 17th or 18th Century, plus numerous contemporary versions under the same name, including those by Laurence Stith (1965), Randy Vader (1994), and [Ken Bible](#) (1998).

**Note:** Some links open at a new site; all open in a new window.

The tune has also been used for other hymns, including:

- [Now The Green Blade Rises](#) (A 1928 Easter hymn by English priest John Macleod Campbell Crum (1872-1958), a beautiful hymn that likens Christ to the growing grain.)
- [Welcome, Happy Morning!](#) (Words by Venantius Fortunatus, c. 530-609, Translated by John Ellerton, 1826-1893.)
- [Godhead Here In Hiding](#) (A translation of [Adoro Te Devote](#), *A meditation on the blessed sacrament*; Words by Thomas Aquinas; Translation by Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.)
- [Hidden God, devoutly I adore Thee](#) (A translation of [Adoro Te Devote](#), *A meditation on the blessed sacrament*; Words by Thomas Aquinas; Translation: Unknown)
- [With All The Powers My Poor Soul Hath](#) (A translation of [Adoro Te Devote](#), *A meditation on the blessed sacrament*; Words by Thomas Aquinas; Translation by Richard Crashaw, adapted by John Austin.)

**Note:** Links open at a new site and in a new window.

As is always the case, the rendering of a particular text is dependent upon the religious beliefs of a particular denomination; expect variations.

This tune was also the basis of Marcel Dupre's (1886-1971) organ composition, *Variations sur un vieux Noël* ("Variations on a French Noel").

Please note that it has been more than 40 years since my courses of French in high school and college. My fluency was never high, and it has not increased over the years. I am unable to provide any translation. Sorry.

**Sources:**

- Percy Dearmer, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Martin Shaw, eds., [The Oxford Book of Carols](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928).
- Walter Ehret and George K. Evans, eds., [The International Book of Carols](#) (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Walton Music Corp., 1963).
- Hugh Keyte and Andrew Parrott, eds., [The New Oxford Book of Carols](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- Erik Routley, [The English Carol](#) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).
- Erik Routley, *The University Carol Book* (Brighton: H. Freeman & Co., 1961).
- William E. Studwell, [The Christmas Carol Reader](#) (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1995)
- *The Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1991)

- *The Book of Hymns* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1964)
- *The Hymnal 1982* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1982)
- *The Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978)