

Christ Are We Bound Indeed to Praise

Christum wir sollen loben schon

L M

A solis ortu cardine

Latin: Coelius Sedulius, c. 450

Latin, 5th c.

German version: Martin Luther, 1524

Arr. Lucas Osiander, 1586, alt.

Christ are we bound in - deed to praise,

The Son of Ma - ry, vir - gin maid,

Far as the dear sun shines with mirth,

Un - to the ends of all the earth.

- 2 Though blest Creator of all things,
A humble servant's form He brings,
Through flesh to pay for flesh the cost,
Lest His creation all be lost.
- 3 From heav'n above God's boundless grace
Was poured into the mother chaste;
A maiden bore the Pledge concealed,
As yet to nature unrevealed.
- 4 The virgin house, that tender heart,
Was as God's temple set apart.
She who by none had been defiled
Was by God's Word then found with child.
- 5 The honored mother gave Him birth
Whom Gabriel announced to earth,
Whom holy John leapt to display
While yet in mother's womb he lay.
- 6 In straw He lay with humble lot,
The manger rude chagrined Him not;
A little milk His only fare
Who ne'er lets birds of food despair.
- 7 The heav'nly choir thereon rejoiced
And angels praised God with their voice.
To lowly shepherds they proclaimed
The Shepherd who the world had made.
- 8 Praise, glory, thanks to Thee be paid,
O Christ, born of the virgin maid,
With Father and with Spirit three,
From now unto eternity.

Christ Are We Bound Indeed to Praise (*Christum wir sollen loben schon*) is Luther's translation of the Latin acrostic hymn *From the End of the Sun's Rising* (*A solis ortus cardine*) by fifth-century poet Coelius Sedulius. The first seven stanzas of Sedulius's hymn, with added doxology, had long been in use as a Christmas hymn. Incidentally, stanzas 8–9, 11, and 13 were also used, with the same doxology tacked on at the end, as the Epiphany hymn *The Foe Herod in Impious Wise* (*Hostis Herodes impie*), which Luther also translated as *Why Fearest Thou, Foe Herod, So* (*Was fürchtst du Feind Herodes sehr*).

Luther probably prepared this translation for use during the Christmas of 1523. It appeared the following year in the *Erfurt Enchiridion* of 1524. For centuries thereafter it served as the chief Christmas hymn among German Lutherans.

The tune with which Luther's version originally appeared was a simplified, syllabic version of the more elaborate fifth-century Gregorian chant that accompanied the Latin hymn. It is the simplified version that has become standard, appearing in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941) as #104, *Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One*. The earlier melismatic melody, however, also persisted for some time among Lutherans. The arrangement here offered is a slightly simplified version of that produced by Lucas Osiander in his 1586 *Fifty Spiritual Songs and Psalms* (*Fünfftzig Geistliche Lieder und Psalmen*). A fine recording using this arrangement with stanzas 1–3, 6, and 8 is featured on the album *Praetorius: Mass for Christmas Morning* by Paul McCreech and the Gabrieli Consort & Players.

The translation provided in *The Lutheran Hymnal* is a slightly altered version of that by Richard Massie, originally published in *Luther's Spiritual Songs* (London: Hatchard & Son, 1854), 9–10. The version in *The Lutheran Hymnal* omits the fourth stanza, and the hymn is missing entirely in more recent hymnals. I desired to offer a new translation that places the name of Christ at the beginning, a change that Luther intentionally made to Sedulius's original. The text and music engraving here offered may be freely used and reproduced for any reason whatsoever.

For more on this hymn, see volume 53 of the American Edition of Luther's Works, pages 237–239.

It is my prayer that this publication will serve for the edification of English-speaking Christians in every place. For more information, visit the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book at:

lutheranchoragebook.wordpress.com

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presents

Christ Are We Bound Indeed to Praise

translated from the German version of

Martin Luther

by

Christopher J. Neuendorf

and set to the musical arrangement of

Lucas Osiander

Davenport, Iowa

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