

Thou Who Art Three in Unity

Der du bist drei in Einigkeit
Attr. Ambrose of Milan, 340–397
German Version: Martin Luther, 1543
Tr. Richard Massie, 1854, alt.

L.M.

O lux beata
Plainchant, 4th c.
Arr. Lucas Osiander, 1586, alt.

Thou who art Three in U - ni - ty,

True God from all e - ter - ni - ty,

The sun is fad - ing from our sight,

Shine Thou on us with heav'n - ly light.

- 2 We praise Thee with the dawning day,
To Thee at evening also pray,
With our poor song we worship Thee
Now, ever, and eternally.
- 3 Let God the Father be adored,
And God the Son, the only Lord,
And equal adoration be,
Eternal Comforter, to Thee.

The Latin hymn “O Blessed Light, Thou Trinity” (“*O lux beata Trinitas*”), attributed to Ambrose of Milan (340–397), was historically sung in the evening at the service of Vespers. A German translation by Martin Luther appeared in 1543 in Joseph Klug’s Wittenberg hymnal as “Thou Who Art Three in Unity” (“*Der du bist drei in Einigkeit*”). This is, in fact, the last hymn that Luther wrote, in the evening of his earthly life.

On its first appearance, Luther’s hymn had no tune associated with it, but within two years, in 1545, hymnals began appearing that included the old plainchant melody. Two forms were initially offered, one in Valentin Babst’s Leipzig hymnal, and another in Wolfgang Köpfel’s Strassburg hymnal. It was the latter that won out. An arrangement of this melody is included in Layriz’s *Kern des deutschen Kirchengesangs*, 1854, and carried over unchanged into the *Mehrstimmiges Choralbuch*, 1906, but it departed from the simplicity of the original plainchant. The arrangement chosen for the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book is a slightly altered version of that by Lucas Osiander in his *Fünfftzig Geistliche Lieder und Psalmen*, 1586, which preserves the plainchant as found in Köpfel.

A translation made by John Mason Neale directly from the Latin original is included in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 1941, as #564, “O Trinity, Most Blessed Light,” set to Nikolaus Herman’s tune, “O Blessed, Holy Trinity” (“*O heilige Dreifaltigkeit*”). For the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book, we have chosen a translation by Richard Massie made from Luther’s German, as altered in Leonard Woolsey Bacon, *Dr. Martin Luther’s Deutsche Geistliche Lieder*, 1884. The text and music here provided may be freely used and reproduced for any purpose whatever, and are offered with the prayer that they may serve for the edification of Christian people everywhere. For more information, visit the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book at:

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The Free Lutheran Chorale-Book

presents

Thou Who Art Three in Unity

by

Martin Luther

and translated by

Richard Massie

with a musical arrangement by

Lucas Osiander the Elder

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